



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

## **The tacit knowledge of Claudio Monteverdi as expressed in the opera La Tragedia di Claudio M**

Boer, J.

### **Citation**

Boer, J. (2024, November 28). *The tacit knowledge of Claudio Monteverdi as expressed in the opera La Tragedia di Claudio M*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4170091>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4170091>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

## The Narrative

As in all history, Claudio Monteverdi comes down to us as a narrative based on documents containing facts, other artefacts and - in his case - encoded artistic output (scores).

This narrative is still alive and constantly rejuvenated after over four hundred years. It has literally been revived in the past hundred and twenty years since exponentially increasing numbers of new performances of his works started to take place.

Parallel to this resounding past (or slightly anticipating it) was the gradual scientific emancipation of musicological activities. These activities had their roots in the work of music theorists and chroniclers, dating back to Monteverdi's days. Below is a condensed overview of this historical positioning of Monteverdi up to the threshold of the 20th century.

Remarkably, every period has its image of the composer Monteverdi. Sometimes, certain aspects of those versions last a bit longer, like the idea that he was the avant-garde inventor of new music and a new style at the beginning of the 17th century. This idea dominated the historiography in the first half of the 20th century. In the 18th century, however, the Monteverdi-Artusi controversy, surviving primarily in print, caused a misinterpretation of Monteverdi's innovative and artistic qualities by questioning his craftsmanship. In the 19th century, a lot of confusion was caused by inaccuracy in the handling of historical facts and data. Although more of this factual information became available, historians filled up the gaps with their imagination.

But in the end, all these variations in storytelling add to an overall concept of the art of a master, which moves performers, audiences and creators.

### Two portraits

Nothing evokes our idea of a dead composer's persona stronger than a good portrait. In Monteverdi's case, we deal with two versions of one portrait. The difference in reception of these two versions is significant in itself.

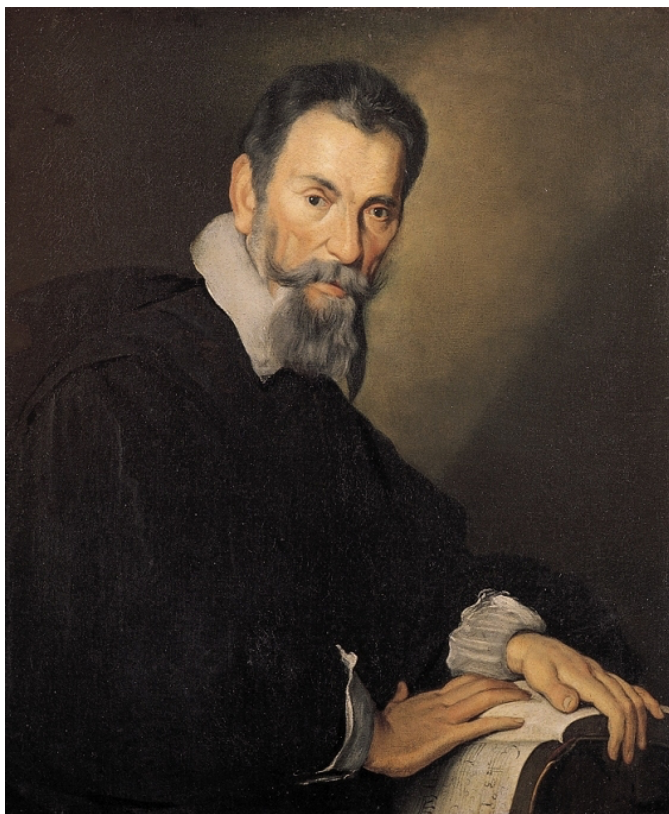
The copy (see plate on the bottom) of a portrait by Bernardo Strozzi (1581 -1644) (*// Cappuccino*) is now in the Tiroler Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum. The original is in the director's room of the Wiener Singverein<sup>1</sup> and was painted in Venice in the early 1630s.

Almost exclusively, only the copy is reproduced in various publications to illustrate the composer. This is how the person Claudio Monteverdi has been known to the world since the second half of the last century.

This is particularly noteworthy because striking details in the original painting are not found in the copy, which gives the impression of a 'photoshopped' image. There are apparent differences in the shape of the head, the eyes, the beard, the haircut, the nose, and the ear and the skin colour. Overall, the impression is that the portrait was painted with a living model, and the copy was probably created posthumously after the original Strozzi painting. Indeed, as a survivor of the plague that had just killed 46.000 people in Venice, it was special to be a living model. He had witnessed Alessandro Striggio (the *Orfeo* librettist) dying from the disease when this dear friend came to Venice with a diplomatic mission from Mantua. After the disaster had passed, Monteverdi entered the service of the church and became a priest, which we also notice from his clothes on the painting.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.a-wgm.at/ausstellungen/musik-venedig>



Illustrations on the previous page:

Bernardo Strozzi, (1581-1644), *Portrait of Claudio Monteverdi*, Vienna. Collection Musikverein, Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien.

Anonymous, (attrib. Bernardo Strozzi), *Portrait of Claudio Monteverdi*, Tiroler Landesmuseum, Innsbruck.

Although questions of copyright have possibly played a role in the fate of Monteverdi's image (trimmed rather than authentic), it is nevertheless striking that now the history of the two paintings is known, this situation has not been altered. Since Paolo Fabbri explained the historical details of both portraits in his 1985 monography, very little attention has been paid to these facts as if they were of little value. Even those who seriously try approaching Monteverdi's presumed original sound ignore the visual equivalent and accept a substitute for the real man.

### **Monteverdi, as seen by his contemporaries**

The two versions of the portrait illustrate what happens when second-hand knowledge and information corrupt the original. Just like this happens in painting, so it also occurs in written testimonies. Many examples of reflections in contemporary reports or comments created Monteverdi's historical image, unadjusted by his personal writings. Only twice was the latter undeniable because he addressed a general audience directly in print, as will be illustrated later.

Though Monteverdi was already frequently admired as 'il divino Claudio' during his lifetime, severe criticism was manifested publicly by Artusi in print or uttered privately, as Doni did in his correspondence to Mersenne. Giulio Cesare Monteverdi offered the audience a peek into the life and mindset of his brother through his explanation of Claudio's public letter in the fifth madrigal book. The impressions of Claudio's character sketched in this public defence align very well with those from the 127 extant letters by Claudio himself.

### **Artusi<sup>2</sup>**

In 1605, Claudio Monteverdi published his fifth book of madrigals, dedicated to his patron, Vincenzo Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua. In the dedication, he refers to performances of these madrigals in the duke's chambers, which led to Monteverdi's appointment as *maestro della musica*. Now printed, they were, as he continues, granted the protection of such a noble Prince that the madrigals "would lead an eternal life to the shame of those who had been seeking to bring death to the work of others."

This last remark was pointing to the Bolognese music theorist and canon Giovanni Maria Artusi, who had published a treatise in 1600 and a sequel in 1603 entitled *L'Artusi overo Delle imperfettioni della moderna musica*.<sup>3</sup> In this treatise, madrigals by Monteverdi were taken - without naming the author - as examples of breaking rules of counterpoint and good taste in the new fashion of composition.

---

<sup>2</sup> For details, see the chapter *Dichiaratione*, pp. 68-80.

<sup>3</sup> Giovanni Maria Artusi, *L'Artusi overo Delle imperfettioni della moderna musica*. (Venice, Giacomo Vincenti, 1600), and *Seconda parte dell'Artusi overo Delle imperfettioni della moderna musica*, (Venice, Giacomo Vincenti, 1603).

Monteverdi waited five years before publicly replying to Artusi's allegations and took the publication of his fifth book as an opportunity to make a statement. This, along with his musical output, would ensure him a long-lasting reputation in music history as the great musical innovator of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The statement was twofold because he opened<sup>4</sup> this fifth book with the madrigal *Cruda Amarilli*, the most heavily attacked by Artusi, followed by the madrigals *O Mirtillo*, *Era l'anima mia* and *Ecco Silvio*. Monteverdi embraced the works in his book by adding to the assertive dedication as a postface, the 'letter to the studious readers', that would initiate an exegesis of this theoretical conflict, which lasts until the present day.

The controversy between Artusi and Monteverdi became a topos in the history of Western music, which was right from the start - as we will see later on - the main subject in many chronicles describing Monteverdi's position. From the year 1609 on, when Adriano Banchieri referred to it, the polemic calmed down, but following the writings of other contemporaries of the composer, it was kept alive in the work of music historians in the centuries to follow.

It is striking that the narrative of Monteverdi as a pivotal innovator at the turn of the century was - probably unintentionally - initiated by himself. Not in the least by his claiming exclusivity of the term *seconda prattica*, which oddly had first appeared in Artusi's sequel of 1603 in a letter by Monteverdi's defender, L'Ottuso.<sup>5</sup> Until now, this defender's identity has not been convincingly revealed, but it would add a very important perspective to the polemic.

The difficulty is that Ottuso's writing style, despite his apparent deep knowledge of the innovations by the new composers as well as the *prima pratica*, excludes the most obvious candidates, one of the Monteverdi brothers.<sup>6</sup> The theorist and Artusi-opponent Ercole Bottrigari referred to L'Ottuso as a real person he knew and for that reason is excluded by Palisca as well. The assumption that Artusi would have made up the defender L'Ottuso himself, as Palisca suggests, lacks substantial evidence.

Monteverdi could have left the defence against all allegations against his music, which would triumph in numerous reprints (Quarto libro, 1603, 8 x and Quinto libro, 1605, 9x). From the beginning, colleagues internationally acclaimed the works. But after five years, he decided it was time for a reaction, as described earlier. So, he addressed his thoughts to the 'studious readers', the intelligentsia of learned musicians and music theorists. They used to be spoken to directly in print, and a letter or preface "Ai lettori" can be found in numerous treatises. However, most such prefaces contained detailed information about performance practice and theoretical issues. This 'message to the readers' was more of a pamphlet and was reprinted only twice, in 1606 and 1608.

---

<sup>4</sup> Seth Coluzzi pointed out that the order of madrigals was the same as Artusi had used them to illustrate his attacks. Only the second madrigal in that line, *Anima mia, perdona* had already been published in the 4th book. (1603). Seth Coluzzi, 'Licks, polemics, and the viola bastarda: unity and defiance in Monteverdi's Fifth Book', *Early Music*, 47/3, (Autumn 2019), p.338.

<sup>5</sup> The term *seconda prattica* was used in a casual way by L'Ottuso academico, an alias for an unidentified person defending Monteverdi in the *Seconda parte dell'Artusi*, quoted in Claudio Palisca, "The Artusi-Monteverdi Controversy." *The New Monteverdi Companion*, (Arnold, Denis, and Nigel Fortune, eds.), (London: Faber & Faber, 1985), p.129ff.

<sup>6</sup> Palisca points also to the opening of the 1605 'lettera' where Monteverdi states he had not reacted before to Artusi's allegations, which would have been odd if he had done so as L'Ottuso. Palisca, op.cit.p. 136.

### **Dichiarazione della lettera.**

The letter by Claudio Monteverdi might have had little impact (certainly not for posterity) if there had not been a follow-up that clarified the 'telegram' statements made in this letter. His brother Giulio Cesare became the spokesman in a following publication two years later, in the summer of 1607. As a postface to the first edition of Claudio's *Scherzi musicali*, he wrote a clarification of his brother's letter to the studious readers (*dichiarazione della lettera*).

For centuries to come, the publications of Artusi in 1600 and 1603 and the defence of the Monteverdi brothers in 1605 and 1607 were the main ingredients for music historians and chroniclers' portrayal and characterisation of Claudio Monteverdi's modernity in his time.

These music historians often copied each other, and after some time, an identity emerged that was heavily coloured by the imagination of the writers.

### **Banchieri**

Already in 1609, Adriano Banchieri, composer, theorist and also a clergyman, embraced in his *Conclusioni nel suono del Organo* the modern practices of composers 'in the guise of a perfect orator.' In this constellation, he put Monteverdi on top of all (p. 60) saying *'non debbo lasciare in far nominanza, del soavissimo compositore di Musiche Claudio Monteverde capo in Musiche appresso il Serenissimo Sig. D. Vincenzo Gonzaghi Duca di Mantova (ben che noto il suo valore universalmente à professori) in materia di moderno componere, poi che li suoi artefiziosi sentimenti in vero sono degni d'intera commendatione, scoprendosi in essi ogni affetuosa parte di perfetta oratione, industremente spiegati, & imitati d'armonia equivalente..'*<sup>7</sup>

"I must not fail to name the most 'suave' composer of music, Claudio Monteverde, head of the music of the Most Serene Lord Don Vincenzo Gonzaga Duke of Mantua (although his worth is known universally to professors of music), in matters of modern composition, for his artful sentiments are truly worthy of total commendation, uncovering therein every affective part of perfect oration industriously laid out and imitated by equivalent harmony."

Banchieri recognises the merits of theorists and composers such as Zarlino and Artusi, but they "have failed to demonstrate in practice how to align the words by imitating the *affetti*, in whatever genre, whether in Latin or vernacular."<sup>8</sup> The affections Banchieri is pointing to are sorrow, passions, sighs, weeping, laughter, errors, questioning, etc.

Their counterpoint is very strict (*osservatissime*), resulting, as he says, in the sweetest sounds, but that has little to do with the text.

In 1609, two years after the defence of Giulio Cesare, this endorsement for Claudio Monteverdi also appeared in print, albeit in a book about organs. It was the first of its kind in a long series of reflections of a historical nature, enlarging the effect of the Artusi-

---

<sup>7</sup> Paolo Fabbri, *Monteverdi*, Trans. Tim Carter. (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.106.

<sup>8</sup> my translation.

Monteverdi controversy. Five years later, Banchieri published his *Cartella musicale*,<sup>9</sup> where he clarified once more that for the *contrapunto osservato*, many rules existed. However, for the modern *contrapunto commune* (improvised), there were no rules, nor could they be made. Vincenzo Galilei already drew this conclusion in 1591<sup>10</sup>. In a way, Banchieri, being the first reporter of the controversy, saw most likely that the origin of this conflict was the incompatibility of a theorist's approach towards the tacit know-how of a skilled practitioner. Adriano Banchieri was obviously in favour of adventurous harmonic progressions by the way he described in the *Cartella* an experience of listening to improvised counterpoint (*contrapunto alla mente sopra il basso*), which, as a result, "with certain observations between them made a delicious hearing."<sup>11</sup>

Banchieri's admiration was not limited to theoretical issues. His appreciation of Monteverdi's music was shown in full proportion when he took him as a model for his Accademia dei Floridi, which he founded in 1615, and consequently invited him on 13 June 1620 to the celebration of the feast of St. Anthony in the San Michele in Bosco near Bologna. Later, in the *Lettere armoniche* of 1628, Banchieri brings back to the readers and Monteverdi's memory that music was played and speeches were held in his honour.<sup>12</sup>

## Huygens

Eleven days later, after Monteverdi returned from Bologna to Venice, his vespers on the feast of St. John the Baptist were witnessed by the young Dutch composer and diplomat Constantijn Huygens.<sup>13</sup> The Dutchman wrote about it in his journal with superlative praise, offering us now a little peek into the local performing forces of those days.

*Le 24<sup>e</sup>, qui fut la feste Saint Jean Baptiste, on me mena au vespres à l'église Saint Jean et Lucie<sup>14</sup>, où j'entendis la plus accomplie musique, que je fay estat d'ouïr en ma vie. Le tant renommé Claudio di Monteverde, maistre de la chappelle à Saint Marc, qui en estoit auteur, la dirigea et modera aussi cette fois, accompagné de 4 theorbes, 2 cornets, 2 fangotti (sic), 2 violins, une viole basse de monstrueuse grandeur, les orgues et autres instruments, qui furent touchez et maniez au parangon les uns des autres, outre 10 ou 12 voix, qui de ravissement me mirent hors de moy.*

"It was the most perfect music I have ever had the pleasure of hearing in my life. The composer of the piece, the widely renowned Claudio Monteverdi, maestro di cappella of San Marco, was also the conductor of this performance, played by four theorbo's, two cornetto's, two bassoons, two violins, a bass viol of gigantic proportions, the organs and other instruments, one played even more beautifully than the other. Furthermore, there were 10 or 12 voices, which put me beyond myself with delight."

<sup>9</sup> Adriano Banchieri, *Cartella musicale nel canto figurale fermo & contrapunto*, (Venice, Vincenti, 1614), p.230.

<sup>10</sup> See Palisca, "The Artusi–Monteverdi Controversy," p.156, n84.

<sup>11</sup> "...con certe osservazioni tra di loro conferite rendono un udito gustosissimo...."

<sup>12</sup> Adriano Banchieri, *Lettere Armoniche*, (Bologna, Mascheroni, 1628), p.141-142.

<sup>13</sup> Constantijn Huygens, *Journal of a journey*, 24 June 1620; for the original text see [https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/\\_bij005189401\\_01/\\_bij005189401\\_01\\_0006.php#054](https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/_bij005189401_01/_bij005189401_01_0006.php#054)

<sup>14</sup> Should be San Giovanni Elemosinario. See Fabbri/Carter, *Monteverdi*, p.176.

## Doni

An interesting second round for Monteverdi to influence his position in music history by writing about himself is a correspondence with Giovanni Battista Doni, who had been seeking contact with him for his treatise<sup>15</sup> dealing with the development of the new style at the beginning of the century. It is significant that the composer proactively approached the chronicler in this case, after hearing that Doni was interested in contacting him as a major oral witness of the period he was describing. From this exchange of information between the two men, only two letters by Monteverdi survived. The angle from Doni is represented in other letters and his treatise.

Of the two letters of Monteverdi to Giovanni Battista Doni that are preserved, the first letter, dated 22 October 1633, discusses after thirty years his struggle with Artusi. He avoids the name and just mentions the cleric as 'a certain theorist' who pretended that in his madrigals, Monteverdi had done some exercises in counterpoint as if it was 'solfege for children who are beginning to learn note against note.' What made it worse is that this insult had been published in print (*la causa fu perche si piglio per gusto di far contro purre in istampa ad un mio madrigal cioe in alcuni passi armonici soi fondato sopra alle ragioni di prima pratica cioe sopra alle regole ordinarie*).<sup>16</sup> The fact that these allegations appeared in print put much extra weight on the attack. Also, Ercole Bottrigari, another target for Artusi, reminded in his defence, the *Aletologia* (which remained only a manuscript), the pompous gesture of being criticised in a printed publication.<sup>17</sup> He writes: "On what authority does he think he has to play the publics censor?"

Concerning publishing, Monteverdi admits in his letter to Doni that he feels obliged and is still working on the treatise he promised in his letter of 1605 to debunk all the allegations of his opponent, be it that he has changed the title from *Seconda pratica ouero perfettione della moderna musica* in *Melodia overo seconda prattica musicale*. Again, claiming the *seconda prattica* as his territory. As explained by his brother, Monteverdi intended with the term *seconda prattica* the priority of text (indicated as *oratione*) within the musical composition.

Doni has understood from the son of Giovanni Bardi (Camerata Fiorentina), Piero de' Bardi that the composers of the circle, with the help of poets Iacopo Corsi and Ottavio Rinuccini came to a point in the new style that could hardly be done better. He says Monteverdi also profited greatly from this cooperation even though Rinuccini did not know/read music.

*"e parimente grandissimo aiuto ricevè il Monteverde dal Rinuccini nell'Arianna, ancorché non sapesse di Musica (supplendo a ciò col suo giudizio finissimo, e con l'orecchia esattissima, che possedeva; come anco si può conoscere dalla qualità, e testura delle sue poesie)..."*

---

<sup>15</sup> Giovanni Battista Doni, *Trattato della musica scenica* (1633-35), Pdf (Roma, Neoclassica, 2018), p. 54, p.124 and p.181, Fabbri p.299 n30.

<sup>16</sup> Letter No. 124, Annonciade Russo, and Jean-Philippe Navarre, *Monteverdi, Correspondance, préfaces et épîtres dédicatoires*, (Sprimont, Mardaga, 2001), p.214. Dennis Stevens, *The Letters of Claudio Monteverdi*, (London, Faber, 1980), p.410 translates: "The reason for this was that he had been pleased to criticise (in print!) one of my madrigals, as regards certain of its harmonic progressions on the basis of tenets of the First Practice."

<sup>17</sup> Bottrigari, 1604, *Aletologia di Leonardo Gallucio à benigni e sinceri lettori*. p.72.

(<https://www.yumpu.com/it/document/read/29866269/bottrigari-ercole-title-aletologia-di-leonardo-gallucio-ai-benigni-e->)



(‘and likewise, Monteverdi received a great deal of help from Rinuccini in *Arianna*, even though he was not into music (making up for this with his very refined judgement and the exact ear he possessed, as can also be seen from the quality and texture of his poems)...’.<sup>18</sup>

Doni goes on to state that the three composers of the new style Peri, Caccini and Monteverdi owed so much to the lessons of the poets (*instruendogli di continuo di pensieri eccellenti, e dottrina esquisita*) and that Corsi and Rinuccini were the real architects of the *Musica scenica*.

However, regarding the more technical details about the musical innovations the chronicler cannot ignore Monteverdi’s role. Doni introduces his analysis of the *Lamento d’Arianna* by saying that for the sake of variation in the new style, he recommends the judgement of Monteverdi, who ‘leaving aside these superstitious rules [about Modi and Tuoni] the composer knew perfectly well how to vary with diversity the cadences of his *Arianna*.’ (..which means wandering through different modes or *tuoni*).<sup>19</sup>

Nevertheless, after writing this recommendation in his treatises, less respect was shown for the intellectual status of the composer. The reason might be a personal one for the omission by Monteverdi to thank the author for receiving a copy of Doni’s book, nor giving any feedback on its content.

Giovanni Battista Doni, 7 July 1638 letter to Marin Mersenne<sup>20</sup>; “...Pour Cl. Monteverde il n’est pas homme de grandes lettres, non plus que les autres musiciens d’aujourd’hui, mais il excelle à faire des melodies pathétiques, merci de la longue pratique qu’il a eu à Florence de ces beaux esprits des Academies, mesme du sieur Rinuccini [...] encore qu’il n’entendist rien en la musique contribua plus que Monteverde à la beauté de ceste Complainte d’Ariadne composee par lui.”

(As for Claudio Monteverdi, he is not a scholarly man, not more than other musicians these days, but is excellent in making moving melodies, thanks to the long practice he had in Florence from these bright minds of the Academies, even Mr. Rinuccini [...] who, despite he was not trained in music, contributed more than Monteverdi to the beauty of this Complaint of Ariadne, composed by him.”)

Again, Doni, who was not a composer himself, was trying to downplay Monteverdi's importance in his path-breaking lamento. In terms of setting a text to music, this work goes much further than just wandering through different modes for colouring the emotional states of the protagonist.

Doni depicted in his letter Monteverdi as limited in his literary training. His presumption that he owed the quality of his work to his long practice in Florence and the elevated spirits of the academies there was, of course, his own invention. The idea that Rinuccini contributed more to the beauty of the lamento than the composer was echoed later by other writers.

As Massimo Ossi<sup>21</sup> observed, there is no reference whatsoever to Monteverdi having a “long practice in Florence with the lofty spirits of the Academy.” This is the first striking example

---

<sup>18</sup> my translation

<sup>19</sup> Doni, *Trattato*, p.16.

<sup>20</sup> Fabbri, *Monteverdi*, p.293.

<sup>21</sup> Ossi, Massimo. *Divining the Oracle: Monteverdi’s Seconda Prattica*. (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2003) p. 191.

of a chronicler inventing biographical details and thus creating confusion about Monteverdi's life for posterity.

## Ban

Even more arrogant than Doni's were the comments of the Dutch priest and theorist Ioan Albert Ban from Haarlem, who dedicated a treatise of 1642 to Constantijn Huygens. First he praises Monteverdi as the composer who achieved more than anyone else. But then he did not hesitate to position himself like Artusi as a school teacher with a patronising conclusion: "...hadde hy den kracht der geluyden, te weeten stemtrappen ende stem-sprongen mede zoo doorgront, hy zoude veel veerder gekomen ende wonderlyke dingen gedaen hebben."<sup>22</sup>

"...would he have understood equally well the power of sounds, that is in voice leading and jumps, he would have come much further and done even more marvellous things."

Ban was not a musician, and, to my knowledge, no musician ever criticised Monteverdi in such a way. As we shall see, this is typical for the theorists and music historians, and it is more likely that Ban's remark was inspired by the assumed deficiencies of Monteverdi as printed by Artusi.

Certainly, his contact with Descartes—then living in Egmond aan den Hoef close to Haarlem—played a role in his judgement. Ban worked with Descartes to calculate the 'perfect harpsichord' tone distances with five additional red keys to the black keys. This was a very rational approach to temperament and music that depended on explicit mathematics.

Ban admired Monteverdi for his rhetorical achievements in music, which was also his priority. He called his interval system after Cicero, *musica flexanima*,<sup>23</sup> the soul-stirring style of composition. However, this style depended on a rigid and complex use of intervals. This might be the reason for his criticism, thinking that the rigour of his own invention was lacking in Monteverdi's works.

A year before Monteverdi died, Ban wrote that he hoped the assertive spirit of this master was still searching for the improvements he had in mind. On the other hand, just like Monteverdi, he sets nature as an example for the searching artist, who cannot invent something genuinely new that is not already to be found in nature.

"De nature is ryk en vast wetende, ende werkende in haer zelve. : wy en bedenken niet nieuws buiten de natuire (sic): maar speuren alles na."

"Nature is rich and firmly knowing, working in itself.: we do not invent something new outside of nature, but are researching everything that is already there."

Ban's image of nature included the laws of physics and its numbers of vibrations, etc. Probably due to taking measurements together with Descartes in 1639, to create the 'Volmaekt Klauwier' (perfect keyboard) with pure enharmonic extensions by extra keys. It is conceivable that he hoped that Monteverdi would continue searching for improvement using this or similar inventions for acceptable intervallic relations. However, it is also very

---

<sup>22</sup> Joan Albert Ban, *Zangh-Bloemzel*, Amsterdam, 1642, fol. 4 r, facsimile F. Noske, Amsterdam, 1969.

<sup>23</sup> Cicero, 'oratio flexanima', in *De oratore*, 2, p.187.

probable that the 'nature as knowledge' concept was of a spiritual kind, which would be appropriate for him as a priest.

## Bonini

Another cleric and contemporary of Monteverdi who wrote down the youngest history of music was the Florentine monk Severo Bonini. Like Doni's, his treatise<sup>24</sup> was not published but it is an interesting source for scholars nowadays. Certainly, when considering that he had studied with Giulio Caccini and, during his formative years, learned the new monodic style while it was developing. By the time he wrote his treatise monody had become the standard, but he positioned the 'eminentissimo maestro' Monteverdi as a singular representative because of his sensitive style. As a reason he gives the maestro's unusual inventions through which he 'roused the sleepy spirits to invent new whims.' (*hà destato li spiriti sonnacchiosi ad' inventar nuovi capricci*).<sup>25</sup>

Among scholars, Bonini is best known for his statement (forty years after its composition) that Arianna's lament was found everywhere.

After summing up the Florentine representatives of the *stile recitativo* he names Monteverdi as the "first among foreigners" (*forestieri*: outside Florence) who "enriched the style with his extraordinary and capricious thoughts in his opera *Arianna*, which was so much loved (*gradita*), that there was not a house with a harpsichord or theorbo, that did not have its lamento."

(*Tra forestieri il primo fù il Signor Claudio Monteverdi il quale arricchì questo stile di peregrini vezzi e nuovi pensieri nella Favola intitolata Arianna. Opera del Signor Ottavio Rinuccini gentilomo di Firenze fù tanto gradita, che non è stata Casa, la quale havendo cimbali, ò Tiorbe in Casa, non havesse il lamento di quella.*)<sup>26</sup>

Despite the praise for Monteverdi's artistic courage, Bonini leaves some doubt about his appreciation. Not only by his choice of words but by sometimes explicitly condemning the construction. 'Some of the Great', he writes, 'are sometimes shaming themselves by delivering more air than art' (*avendo piu aria che arte*). Like an echo of Artusi, he takes as an example the madrigal *Sfogava con le stelle*, of Monteverdi's book IV, where the author, according to him, had lost the good rules of counterpoint (*questo Autore mentre lo componeva smarrisse le buone regole del Contrappunto*) since there are many perfect consonances of the same species that descend and ascend together.

## Posthume praise

The only other contemporary additions to the biography of Monteverdi came just after his death when he was honoured in print by the *Fiori Poetici* and particularly the *Laconismo* written by the priest Matteo Caberloti.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Severo Bonini, *Prima parte de' discorsi e regole sopra la musica et il contrappunto*, (Ms.) Facsimile by Leila Gallena Luisi, Cremona, Fondazioni Claudio Monteverdi, 1975).

<sup>25</sup> Severo Bonini, *Discorsi e regole sopra la musica et il contrappunto* [88r], transcription by Mary Ann Bonino 1979, [https://chmtl.indiana.edu/smi/seicento/BONDIS\\_TEXT.html](https://chmtl.indiana.edu/smi/seicento/BONDIS_TEXT.html)

<sup>26</sup> *Idem*. See also Tim Carter, *Monteverdi's Musical Theatre*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2002), p.4.

<sup>27</sup> Caberloti, 'Laconismo delle alte qualità di Claudio Monteverdi', in *Fiori poetici raccolti nel funerale del ...signor Claudio Monteverdi*, ed. G. B. Marinoni (Venice, Miloco, 1644).

Artusi is no longer mentioned in this *oraison funebre*, but indirectly plays his part by the remark that Monteverdi's intended treatise on the perfection of modern music was prevented by his untimely death.

This conclusion was probably mainly motivated by the urge to pay tribute to the genius of Monteverdi in modern composing. Caberloti was more accurate, as Ellen Rosand pointed out, in describing the effect of the wide emotional range and contrast displayed in Monteverdi's operas.<sup>28</sup> After a series of rhetorical questions, Caberloti comes to the main characteristic that Monteverdi was able to change the affects from moment to moment.

*E nella varietà de' suoi componimenti per le Nozze de' Principi, e ne Theatri di questa Serenissima Città rappresentati, non variano di momento in momento gli'affetti?*

*Perche hora t'invitano al riso, il quale in un tratto sforzato dei cangiare in pianto, e quando pensi di pigliar l'armi alla Vendetta, all'hora appunto con miracolosa metamorfosi cangiandosi l'harmonia si dispone il tuo cuore alla Clemenza: in un subito ti senti riempire di timore, quando altrettanta fretta t'assiste ogni confidenza.*

“And with the variety of his compositions for the weddings of princes and performed in the theatres of this illustrious city, did the affects not change from moment to moment? Because now they invite laughter, which all at once is forced to change into crying, and just when you are thinking of taking up arms in vengeance, a marvellous change of harmony disposes your heart into clemency; in one moment you feel yourself filled with fear and in the next, you are possessed by complete confidence.”<sup>29</sup>

### **Historicisation**

A bit more than half a century after Monteverdi's death, the contemporary perspective had vanished, and a process of turning practical knowledge into written form was established. A chain of storytellers kept the Monteverdi myths alive. Once again, the clergy undertook this self-imposed task. All these contributions show that Ercole Bottrigari and Monteverdi were rightfully upset that Artusi's objections had appeared in print.

### **Tevo**

This is, for instance, clearly the case with Zaccaria Tevo in his *Musico testore*<sup>30</sup> from 1706. After one century, he reviews the Artusi-Monteverdi controversy, explaining objections to the free treatment of dissonances and showing his understanding of Artusi's points of view. Despite appreciating Monteverdi's inventiveness and genius, Tevo believed that ignoring the rules had weakened his compositions.

### **Martini**

Later, during the 18th century, the story of compositional weaknesses was revived by Padre Giambattista Martini, in his *Esemplare, o sia Saggio fondamentale pratico di contrapunto*

---

<sup>28</sup> Ellen Rosand, *Monteverdi's last operas, A Venetian Trilogy*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2007) p.197.

<sup>29</sup> Translation Ellen Rosand.

<sup>30</sup> Zaccharia Tevo, *Musico Testore*, (Venezia, Antonio Bartoli, 1706), p.175-178.

*fugato*.<sup>31</sup> Martini sketches Monteverdi as ‘one of the first to introduce modern music, and for that reason, he had many adversaries.’ He calls Artusi one of the principal adversaries (probably imagining more of them) and in his publications among the others (who else?) Monteverdi was the primary target. To help the reader see the full impact, Martini takes him to the battlefield: ‘The heated war between the two parties was bitter.’

There are no details about who the other opponents of Monteverdi would have been, but many writers repeated this tale for a century to come. And the verdict of *seconda prattica* was yet again confirmed in print.

### **Burney**

Charles Burney, in his *General History of Music*,<sup>32</sup> dedicated a chapter on ‘Monteverde’ for which he was indebted to Padre Martini. He met the Italian master in Bologna during his journey in Italy and had most of his information first-hand. Nevertheless, his own imagination helped him dress up the story a bit, neglecting some chronological and topographical facts and, above all, the original sources. It is interesting that he specifies Claudio Monteverdi as someone who initially distinguished himself on the tenor viol, while others only speak of viola. The viola da gamba might be Martini’s translation of *vivuoia*, which is found in Monteverdi’s dedication to Vincenzo Gonzaga.

But in contrast with these plausible observations also Burney’s errors originated from Martini’s *Storia della Musica*, which was not always as accurate as his reputation would suggest. An example are the Madrigals for 3,4, and 5 voices, which he classified as published in 1582, the year of *Sacrae cantiunculae* for three voices, Monteverdi’s first publication. For some reason, Burney names Ingegneri ‘maestro di capella’ of Duke Vincenzo I and Monteverdi following lessons with him after entering the Duke’s court music. François Fétis would later copy this error without checking. Also, the so-called deficiencies in composition are echoed by Fétis.<sup>33</sup> Burney obviously had not seen the editions of the early madrigal books. Otherwise, he would have noticed that Ingegneri was mentioned as Monteverdi’s teacher years before he entered the court music in Mantua.

Charles Burney did not hesitate to dress up the whole controversy with Artusi saying Monteverdi “violated many rules of counterpoint...” which resulted in “...many opponents, who treated him as an ignorant corruptor of the arts.” [...] According to Burney, after Artusi published his treatise, “musicians entered the lists on both sides, and the war became general.” Thus, copying, without further study, the narrative that was turned by Padre Martini into a story of war with substantial troops on both sides.

In the fourth volume,<sup>34</sup> of his *General History of Music*, we read that Charles Burney was unable to distinguish the presumed superiority of Monteverdi over Peri and Caccini when it

---

<sup>31</sup> Giambattista Martini, *Esemplare, o sia Saggio fondamentale pratico di contrapunto fugato* Tomo, II, (Bologna, 1775) p.180-185.

<sup>32</sup> Charles Burney, *A General History of Music*, volume III, (London, 1789), p.233.

<sup>33</sup> François Joseph Fétis, *Biographie Universelle des musiciens*, Tome 6, (1867) p.448,; "fils des pauvres parents" ... "Ingenieri maître de chapelle du duc" "Il est facile de voir que son ardente imagination ne lui laissa pas le loisir d'étudier avec attention le mécanisme de l'art d'écrire, car les incorrections de toute espèce abondent dans ses ouvrages." "Maitre de chapelle" (sic!) on the frontispiece of the 5<sup>th</sup> book of madrigals 1604. (sic) Gallica p.447. (1840)

<sup>34</sup> Charles Burney, *General History of Music*, Volume IV, (London, 1789), p.27.

concerns the development of recitative in dramatic music. He notices that Monteverdi paved the way for innovation by harmonic audacities to such a point that "every fortunate breach of an old rule seems to be regarded as the establishment of a new." He continues that apparently, "everything is now allowable in musical composition as long as it does not offend cultivated ears." Nevertheless, there is not much praise of Burney for *Orfeo* and he complains mostly about incomprehensible dissonances and the counterpoint in two parts being deficient. "Some sagacity is necessary to discover (distinguish) the errors of the press from those of the composer."

Burney gives a few excerpts from *Orfeo* to illustrate what he calls the incomprehensible offences to the ear by certain voice leadings. In line with Artusi, he accuses Monteverdi of mistakes that even a beginner in composition would not make.

Considering that at the end of the 18th century, there was very little knowledge about performance practice around 1600, it is understandable that Burney's aesthetic judgement was based on the idea that the score was the music. The figures he added to the bass in the examples from *Orfeo* show that he did not know about the harmonic idiom of the period. Burney's footnote in this example quotes Pietro Della Valle, who did not publish his discourse himself but had it made accessible by Doni. In his discursive letter *Della musica dell'età nostra che non è punto inferiore, anzi è migliore di quella dell'età passata*, (*About music of our times which is not inferior, but rather better than that of the past*) 1640, Della Valle states that under the influence of Rinuccini, Bardi and Corsi and other 'erudite Toscan gentlemen' the later works of Monteverdi were considerably better (*migliorasse*) than the first. ("*...si vede quanto l'istesso Monteverde ne migliorasse nelle ultime sue cose, che sono state assai differente dalle prime.*")<sup>35</sup> Burney took this as a confirmation of his low esteem of *Orfeo*.

In his time, Burney and others attributed the innovation of music theatre mainly to the poets. In *Le rivoluzioni del teatro musicale italiano*,<sup>36</sup> Stefano Arteaga, discusses at length all the qualities of Rinuccini and his opera *Dafne* that was performed in Florence. Without providing any proof Arteaga writes that Rinuccini's *Arianna* was also performed in Florence in the years following, 'modulated' by Monteverdi. Indicative of his sloppiness is Arteaga's mistake of describing Arianna lamenting Giasone's departure on one page and on the next page, quoting the libretto with Theseus (Teseo). Anyway, the *lamento* was, in Arteaga's words, for a long time, the top of opera in this genre (*Capo d'opera dell'arte in quell genere*), and the merits of Rinuccini were represented enough by this fragment alone. Significantly, Arteaga did not mention Monteverdi's contribution, thus downplaying the merits of the composer.

## Fétis

As mentioned above, François Joseph Fétis copied information from Padre Martini and Charles Burney when he added his share among the music historians to the narrative about Monteverdi in the 19th century.

---

<sup>35</sup> Solerti, *Le origine del melodramma*, p. 154.

<sup>36</sup> Stefano Arteaga, *Le rivoluzioni del teatro musicale italiano dalla sua origine fino al presente*, tomo1, (Bologna, Carlo Trenti, 1783) p.195.

He also corrected Burney after consulting Ernst Ludwig Gerber's lexicon,<sup>37</sup> the false presumption that Monteverdi developed his style of daring dissonances in theatrical works. These were written after Artusi published his first attack in 1600.

In his first version of the *Biographie universelle des musiciens*, which he compiled between 1837 and 1844, the author, who specialised in harmonic studies in Paris, makes some interesting observations. Fétis wondered why Monteverdi was unaware of the implications of his innovative approach to harmonic matters that transformed music from a modal system to modern tonality. At least he did not address this in his defence of the letter to the studious readers.

*“Il n'aborde pas la grande question des transformations de l'harmonie et des tonalités et ne se doute pas de l'importance de ce qu'il a fait. Monteverde avait été dirigé à son insu par son génie à toutes ces innovations, et sans aucune direction philosophiques”.*<sup>38</sup>

(He did not tackle the major issue of transformations in harmony and tonality and had no idea of the importance of what he had done. Monteverdi had been led unwittingly by his genius to all these innovations and without any philosophical guidance.)

By attributing the harmonic innovations to a kind of intuitive way of working (*à son insu*), Fétis refers to the composer's implicit knowledge. It is his own observation because Monteverdi's letters were not yet available at the beginning of the 19th century. Monteverdi might have been unaware he had transformed harmony when writing his defence in 1605, but not anymore when he wrote his letter to Doni about finding his own way while composing the lamento. (see above)

Later, Pietro Canal<sup>39</sup> endorses in his book about music in Mantua the view of Fétis on the intuitive approach of Monteverdi. He just formulated it differently and attributes the harmonic innovations to the 'fine ear and vivid listening' of Monteverdi rather than relying on firm principles or philosophies about these changes. Canal concludes by stating that the composer was the first to pave the way for a modern use of dissonances and thus elucidated the essence of tonality.

Understanding the full implications of the harmonic transformation was not possible for Fétis, who (like Burney) obviously had problems interpreting the unfigured basses of the time. His enthusiasm about the *lamento d'Arianna* as a profoundly melancholic piece of music, was not damaged by, as he called it:

*La basse incorrecte et l'harmonie heurtée et bizarre, dont le compositeur a accompagné ce morceau ne nuisent point au caractère de mélancolie profonde qu'on y remarque.*<sup>40</sup>

(The incorrect bass and jolting, bizarre harmony, by which the composer has accompanied this piece, detract nothing of the deep melancholic character it conveys.)

It is unclear what the source is for Fétis' version, but there are many deviations from all the known sources. The figured bass has been reworked by changing notes and harmonies. Two added bars (15-16) repeating the phrase "in così gran martire" weaken the *abruptio* at the

---

<sup>37</sup> Ernst Ludwig Gerber, *Neues historisch-biographisches Lexikon der Tonkünstler*: K-R, Volume 72, 1813, p.453

<sup>38</sup> François Joseph Fétis, *Biographie universelle des musiciens et bibliographie générale de musique*. Tome 6, (1840) p. 449f.

<sup>39</sup> Pietro Canal, *Della Musica in Mantova, Notizie tratte prinzipialmente dall'archivio Gonzaga*, (Mantova, 1881) p.102.

<sup>40</sup> Fétis, *Biographie Universelle des Musiciens*, 1840, Tome 6, p.450.

reprise of the opening bars. It seems a 'cosmetical' implant by Fétis, just like the other alterations, to adapt the style to the expected appreciation of his audience.

In his updated edition of the *Biographie Universelle*, which appeared in 1864, Fétis added a considerable extension of information about Monteverdi, thanks to recent research.

However, this new knowledge was not always accurate, such as the work of Francesco Caffi.<sup>41</sup> From this Venetian author, he copied the information that Monteverdi was born from 'oscuri parenti which he understood as 'fils de pauvres parents' (son of poor parents). With hindsight, this is rather funny, bearing in mind that Baldassarre Monteverdi was a doctor who reported to Duke Vincenzo that he had to lend his son 500 scudi because the court often did not pay the wages over the past years.

Also, the story that Monteverdi became a pupil of Marc'Antonio Ingegneri after being accepted in Mantua because the latter would have been the duke's maestro di cappella, is a persistent misconception that many historians shared.

The twisted view of Monteverdi's formative years was based on the impression that he owed his acceptance at the Mantuan court only for being a gifted viol player. For Fétis and other lexicographers, that should explain some clumsiness in counterpoint. However, certainly, from the virtuoso viola bastarda players, an extensive and intrinsic knowledge of counterpoint was required. In my opinion, this is extremely relevant for a proper idea of the specific qualities of Monteverdi as an inventor of instant counterpoint in various musical textures. For the 19<sup>th</sup>-century lexicographers, the following knowledge was not yet available.

Both Girolamo Della Casa, at the beginning of the viola bastarda fashion, and Francesco Rognoni, at the end of it, stress the importance of an intelligent approach to realising *ex tempore* added notes to a composition.

- Girolamo Dalla Casa; *Della Viola Bastarda* [...] "nella qual professione si va toccando tutte le parti, si come fanno gli intelligenti, che fanno professione."<sup>42</sup> (in which profession one touches all the parts, as the knowledgeable do, who realise this practice)

- Francesco Rognoni, wrote in his paragraph *Della Viola Bastarda* that the instrumentalist was creating his part improvising through all the registers " *hora con nuovi contraponti, hor con pasaggi d'imitationi.*"<sup>43</sup> (and now adding new counterpoint, then with passages of imitations.)

The historians' opinions were strongly influenced because their information depended exclusively on accessible printed sources. The war metaphor of Padre Martini received an extra attribute from Caffi (p.216), baptising the book of Artusi, 'the banner of war' (*lo stendardo di guerra*). Fétis confidently repeated the information and even Artusi's self-organised support by the Florentine humanist Girolamo Mei, using the posthumous publication of his *Discorso*<sup>44</sup> of 1602. Caffi had blindly followed this fallacy because Mei died

---

<sup>41</sup> Francesco Caffi, *Storia della Musica Sacra nella cappella ducale di San Marco da Venezia*, (Venice, Stab.di G. Antonelli, 1854) p.215f.

<sup>42</sup> Girolamo Dalla Casa, *Il vero Modo di Diminuir* (1584) Libro Secondo, Alli Lettori.

<sup>43</sup> Francesco Rognoni, parte seconda del *Selva de Varii Pasaggi* (sic), (Venice, 1620) p.2.

<sup>44</sup> Artusi inserted in his *Seconda Parte delle Imperfettioni* some passages from Girolamo Mei's *Discorso Sopra la Musica Antica e Moderna* (1602), pretending that the Florentine humanist confirmed his theory. See E. Vogel, dissertation 1887, p.30.



in 1594. Six years before the publication of *L'Artusi*, and as far as we know, completely unaware of Monteverdi's existence.

### Beginnings of revival

A crucial step François Joseph Fétis took was his attempt to let Monteverdi's and other music from the past sound again, evoking the ideas of that past. For his series of *Concerts historiques* at the conservatoires, first in Paris and later in Brussels, he even made an effort (to a great extent in vain) to recreate the sound of the original instrumentations.

The first concert in this series was on 8 April 1832 and dedicated to the early history of opera, starting in 1590. Fétis introduced the concerts with lectures and demonstrated his talk with substantial fragments from the operas at stake. After playing Caccini and Peri, the audience was confronted with the first sounding proofs of Monteverdi's *Orfeo*. The best available singers were recruited, and there was a promise of period instruments from the Brussels Museum collection. As a former curator and librarian of the Paris Conservatoire, Fétis profited from the vague distinction between private ownership and institutional property when appointed director in Brussels. Many books were returned to Paris after his death.

The announcement of viols, basses de viole, organs, old guitars, and harp could not always be realised, as we learn from the sardonic reviews<sup>45</sup> of the *concerts historiques*, viciously posted by Hector Berlioz in the *Gazette Musicale de Paris*.

Berlioz's disappointment is understandable if we consider his passion for instrumentation and diversity in sound character. There is a report by August Tolbeque, a 19th-century specialist in historical cello and viola da gamba, which stated that to find musicians who could play them, Fétis had to cope with modernised historical models of instruments. He ended up with disguises<sup>46</sup> of cello, guitar, harp, etc., and he later admitted to regret that the performances did not match his views.

Fétis not only adapted the instruments to the taste of his time. In his copy of the *Lamento d'Arianna* (see above), the changes he made in the harmonies, but also in the structure, are proof of his unobligated attitude in matters of authenticity.

The copies of *Orfeo* we can find now in the digitised<sup>47</sup> Fétis collection of the Belgian Royal Library show alterations that were very probably made with the Paris performances in mind. The famous passage "Tu sei morta" from the second Act of the opera is transposed one tone higher. This might have to do with the tenor's tessitura, who sang at the *concert historique* in 1832, and as such, would be understandable.

But apart from the highly simplified harmony, Fétis also changed the melody considerably right from the opening of this recitative, starting at e' instead of b-flat. As a consequence, the character of this passage is more that of a lyrical tenor from the early 19th century. The original chromatism which Monteverdi used to colour the emotion is erased by a

---

<sup>45</sup> Hector Berlioz, "Concert historique de M. Fétis", *Gazette Musicale de Paris*, no. 18, 5 Mai 1833, p.155.

<sup>46</sup> "...montant la basse de viole en violoncello, la viole d'amour en alto, le pardessus de viole en violon, le luth en guitare, etc." Peter Holman, "The Strobach syndrome François-Joseph Fétis, Historical Fakes and the Early Music", *Musica Disserenda*, XIX/2, (2023), p.15, n12.

<sup>47</sup> <https://uurl.kbr.be/1909104/p221>

straightforward and banal melodic development. The whole scene is replaced by newly composed recitatives, maintaining the original rhetorical outlines and gestures but with little understanding of the refined Italian declamation of early opera. Monteverdi's admirable blend of text and music, which always resulted in a great variety of declamatory rhythm is altogether lost. If this is the score of what was presented as Monteverdi's music at the *concert historique* of April 1832, the list of Fétis falsifications can be extended with these presumed reconstructions of *Orfeo*.

The main reason for the success of the *concerts historiques* and the impression Fétis made digging up old masterpieces was most probably due to the all-star cast<sup>48</sup> of four tenors, three sopranos and two basses he had at his disposal. In retrospect, it is incredible that the very best singers of his time, as well as outstanding instrumentalists, were willing to contribute to this adventure. Virtuosi, who normally sang the leading roles of Rossini and Meyerbeer operas in Paris and throughout Europe, such as Giovanni Battista Rubini, Luigi Lablache and Wilhelmine Schroeder-Devrient, were now performing the highlights of centuries ago in Fétis adaptations.

From the changes that Fétis made in the passages from *Orfeo*, it seems that he had to satisfy the taste of the audience and comfort the singers by offering a more familiar idiom than represented by the original notes. It seems obvious that in this way, the singers could probably sight-read this 'early music'. To make an impact, the final duet between Apollo and Orpheus was extended with repeats and additions (see examples), so it sounded more like the belcanto of contemporary composers. With these aforementioned tenors, also today, this would make a great impression.

Remarkably but in no way by chance, these historical concerts coincided with what would later go down in history as *l'affaire Fétis*. The man had been fired as librarian of the Paris Conservatoire and moved to Brussels to continue his career as director of the Belgian Royal Conservatoire. After his departure, a large part of the collections of the Conservatoire and the Bibliothèque Royal Paris, such as old prints, manuscripts, magazines etc., were missing. Many other objects were mutilated and damaged by personal annotations, and others were torn from their bindings. After three had passed unnoticed, only one large moving box of books was intercepted by Paris customs while the rest had left for its destination in Brussels. In his correspondence, Fétis kept denying he had done something illegal. Apparently, he considered himself the only person who should have these materials at his disposal because others were just ignorants in the field.<sup>49</sup> His authority was based on his monumental effort to write a history of music in an encyclopedic format, the *Histoire universelle des musiciens*, which was indeed an exceptional achievement. But also full of errors that were not corrected in a second and revised edition after twenty years. A lot could have easily been adjusted if he had taken the time to be more conscientious or at least more scrupulous.

### **Kiesewetter**

The *concerts historiques* in Paris were not the only events of such nature in Europe in the 1830's. In Vienna, the work of amateur musicologist Georg Raphael Kiesewetter resulted not

---

<sup>48</sup> Aristide Farrenc, "Les concerts historiques de M. Fétis à Paris", *La France Musicale*, (1855), p.2.

<sup>49</sup> François Lesure, "L'affaire Fétis," *Revue belge de Musicologie*, 28/30 (1974 - 1976), p.221; "...les livres sur lesquelles je travaille sont plus utilement placés dans mes mains que dans celles de qui que se soit."

only in publications but performances as well. They took place at his house and were programmed with vocal repertoire from the 16th to the 18th century. The repertoire was approached with genuine curiosity, as can be read in his *History of Modern Music of Western Europe* and resulted in a broad overview that made him publish a separate book in 1841 on secular vocal music of the Middle Ages until the beginnings of opera.<sup>50</sup>

In the first edition of the history of music, Kiesewetter's observations of Monteverdi were based on limited source material. He was, therefore, copying errors in dates and facts, like Rinuccini as librettist of *Orfeo*. Also, his judgment of the free treatment of dissonances in Monteverdi's madrigals is still an echo of Padre Martini. In line with the exaggeration of the latter, Kiesewetter suggests that Monteverdi was attacked by his learned colleagues ('heftig angefochten von seinen gelehrten Kunstgenossen'). Evidently, again, no other names of opponents are given than Artusi. However, he adds that Monteverdi might have inspired composers to explore the application of dissonances in ways that were formerly unaccepted or not conceived as possible.

Like Fétis, Kiesewetter also did not correct his errors<sup>51</sup> in the revised edition of his history of music, published in 1846, despite having proven to know all the correct data in his 1841 publication about the rise of opera. These were based on the work of Carl von Winterfeld's *Johannes Gabrieli und sein Zeitalter* published in the same year as the first edition of Kiesewetter's *History of Music*, 1834.

Von Winterfeld had done first-rate research in primary sources in several Italian cities and was the first to publish a transcription of the *Lamento d'Arianna*, though only the beginning. It is not clear what he used as a source, but the characteristic dissonance of the second note (b-flat) is smoothed by a change of the bass note, a 'correction' that was copied by many after this publication. In the fifth bar, the seventh of the melody is changed into a fifth, maybe to avoid the unprepared dissonance, but causing a parallel fifth to the next bar. A real error that Monteverdi would not have made. Also, on the word 'volete', the original painful *e* against *b-flat* in the bass is softened into an innocently embedded anticipation.

In his book,<sup>52</sup> Von Winterfeld points to the fame of this lamento, which was considered in its time "a miracle of art" and "if we disregard some of the awkwardness and harshness of the modulation, which must have been inseparable from the first attempts of the new music genre, we cannot fail to recognise the strength of the passionate expression in it." Again, the particular inventions of the old maestro are seen as clumsy mistakes against the rules of harmony and counterpoint.

In 1862, Kiesewetter's nephew, August Wilhelm Ambros, also published a history of music. Remarkably, he added errors that his uncle had not made, apparently by quoting recent authors such as Francesco Caffi. Nevertheless, he felt qualified to judge the lamento for his readers but failed to check data and facts that were already known for a century, as could

---

<sup>50</sup> Raphael Georg Kiesewetter, *Geschichte der europäisch-abendländischen oder unserer heutigen Musik. Darstellung ihres Ursprungs, ihres Wachstums und ihrer stufenweise Entwicklung; von dem ersten Jahrhundert des Christenthums bis auf unsere heutige Zeit.* (Leipzig, 1834 (Nachdruck 1846)), English translation 1848.

<sup>51</sup> Kiesewetter, *Geschichte*, 1846, 2. Ausgabe p.75; "Auch noch im Jahre 1600 gelangte die Arianna des Rinuccini mit Musik von Peri [.....] in Florenz zur Aufführung. Im Jahre 1606 dieselbe Arianna mit Musik von Claudio Monteverde, dann 1607 der Orfeo des Rinuccini ebenfalls mit Musik von Monteverde."

<sup>52</sup> Von Winterfeld, *Johannes Gabrieli*, p.37.

be read in the *General History of the Science and Practice of Music* By Sir John Hawkins of 1775.

Ambros wrote:

*Ja, wer nur dieses Stück, beziehungsweise die erste Strophe kennt, wird sogar geneigt sein, Monteverde auf eine Höhe zu stellen, welche er wohl sicher erreicht haben würde, wäre er etwa Zeitgenosse Gluck's gewesen, welche aber in seiner Zeit zu erreichen nicht einmal die Flügel seines Genius stark genug waren. Der Gesang selbst schon zeigt es in seinem Verlaufe — denn auch er verfällt endlich dem Grundübel dieser ersten dramatischen Versuche — er wird monoton. [...]*

*Im folgenden Jahre 1608 folgte die Oper „Orfeo“ nach der Dichtung eines Ungenannten (nicht Rinuccini's) und der sogenannte Ballo delle Ingrate — eine Composition, wo die Musik trotz der antiken Götter, die im Textbuche erscheinen, zum erstenmale im vollen Zauberschimmer des Romantischen steht.<sup>53</sup>*

(Yes, who, knowing only this piece [Lamento d'Arianna], more in particular the first strophe, would be inclined to put Monteverdi on a level that he would have reached if he were Gluck's contemporary? To reach this in his time, the wings of his genius were not strong enough. The song itself shows it in its course - for it too falls prey to the basic evil of these first dramatic attempts - it becomes monotonous. [...] In the following year, 1608, came the opera *Orfeo* with the libretto of an unnamed (not Rinuccini) and the so-called "Ballo delle Ingrate" - a composition where the music, despite the antique Gods that appeared in the libretto, for the first time stands in the magic glimmer of the romantic.)

Historians and Theorists were equally fluent in delivering their judgements and critical observations. But as we have seen before, a lot of it consisted of a chain of copied 'knowledge' and lacked understanding and scrutiny.

Earlier in Ambros's *Geschichte*, we read that Monteverdi had been attacked by other representatives of the old music style:

*"Claudio scheint auch noch von anderen Anhängern der alten Musikstyls allerlei Angriffen erfahren zu haben."<sup>54</sup>* Again, the persistent myth that Padre Martini started about the crowd of Monteverdi's opponents is repeated here. Although Ambros was active as a musician and composer and a professor of music history in Prague, he did not show much understanding from that perspective.

## **Gevaert**

A few years after the publication of Ambros' fourth volume of *Geschichte der Musik*, the Belgian composer and musicologist François-August Gevaert contributed substantially to the revival of early music by making it available for performance. In 1868, he published an anthology<sup>55</sup> of Italian vocal music from the 17th and 18th centuries, giving an impressive overview of highlights and stylistic development. He had just returned from Paris, where he was active until the French-German war as director of the Opera, after having premièred

---

<sup>53</sup> August Wilhelm Ambros, *Geschichte der Musik* IV, (Leipzig, 1862), p.358. My translation.

<sup>54</sup> Ambros, *Geschichte*, p.353.

<sup>55</sup> François- August Gevaert, *Les Gloires de L'Italie*, (Paris, Heugel & fils, 1868) Anthology of unpublished vocal music, arranged for Piano and Voice for conservatoires in France, Belgium, Germany and Italy.

seven of his own operas. Gevaert succeeded Fétis in Brussels as the director of the Royal Conservatoire. He appointed teachers of the highest calibre in Europe, such as Eugène Ysaÿe and Henri Vieuxtemps. The latter was Arnold Dolmetsch's teacher, and in this light, it is significant that under Gevaert the interest in performing music from the past was intensified after Fétis' retirement.

Among the early Baroque composers in Gevaert's anthology, the first strophe of the lamento was the only work by Monteverdi he considered appropriate to include. From a didactic point of view, it is understandable that Gevaert did not consider parts from *Orfeo* suitable for the students of the conservatoires to whom he addressed the anthology. There would be too much to explain or adapt.

Like his predecessor Fétis, Gevaert inserted some alterations, and he probably even copied from him. Changes in rhythm that go against the meter of the text, such as "E che volete.." (bar 7), and "in cosi dura sorte" (bar 11) might lead back to Winterfeld's transcription.

There is, however, no other explanation for the missing word "voi" (bar 8) than Gevaert having copied Fétis' transcription. Likewise, this indicates that the most popular version of the lamento, in Alessandro Parisotti's *Arie Antiche*, must have been taken directly from *Les Gloires de L'Italie*. Just like many other songs and arias, which were not from the original sources, as the compiler says in his preface.<sup>56</sup> Parisotti states that he collected the works in his volumes from old manuscripts and prints. He regretted that 'he had to limit himself to this selection.' He claims to have done his utmost in transcribing the works, not changing anything from the original, and even to have consulted various manuscripts to come closest to the most elegant form.

For many generations of singers and students through the 20th century, the *Arie Antiche* remained an introduction to the vocal repertoire of the 17th and 18th century. The influence on their style of performance is noticeable until the present day.

The immediate popularity of Parisotti's version can be traced right up to the orchestration of the lamento, by Ottorino Respighi, resulting in an invitation by the conductor Arthur Nikisch for a performance with the Berliner Philharmoniker in 1908. Respighi had taken Parisotti's arrangement of the lamento as a starting point, using the transposition to F-Minor, now in the advantage for the tessitura of the Dutch star soprano Julia Culp.<sup>57</sup> For the rest of the lamento, he must have found another source, which had become available since the late 1880s, primarily by the work of Emil Vogel.

### **The rise of musicology: Emil Vogel and Romain Rolland**

Rigorous research in the late 19th century and philological scrutiny profoundly changed the historical awareness of musicology. Direct consultation of the sources and archival studies provided answers to questions that were hardly asked beforehand because historians kept copying each other, including all the errors, presumptions, and fantasies.

The decade between 1885 and 1895 saw a disclosure of important archives and libraries in Italy. As a 24-year-old student from Berlin, Emil Vogel travelled to Italy with a Prussian scholarship to assist with studies on Palestrina.

---

<sup>56</sup> Alessandro Parisotti, *Arie antiche*, vol. 1-3, (Milano, Ricordi, 1885-1894).

<sup>57</sup> The score with piano reduction of Respighi's *lamento* was dedicated to Julia Culp, *The Dutch Nightingale* (1880-1970).

But soon, he followed his own interest and singlehandedly rewrote the history of Claudio Monteverdi, based on facts from primary sources. He profited from the publication by Stefano Davari,<sup>58</sup> who had published his findings of the Mantuan Gonzaga archives in 1885 and introduced a new voice through Monteverdi's extant letters.

Vogel summarised his findings in a dissertation<sup>59</sup> of 45 pages, which granted him a doctorate title on 4 August 1887 at the Friedrich Wilhelm Universität in Berlin. Soon after, he published the rest of his study in an article<sup>60</sup> of 136 pages in the *Vierteljahrsschrift für Musikwissenschaft*, including some of Monteverdi's letters, an almost complete list of his printed music and the first complete and faithful transcription of the *Lamento d'Arianna*. He found the untitled lamento in the Biblioteca Nazionale in Florence, after searching<sup>61</sup> for the score of *Arianna* in all major libraries of North- and Middle Italy.

This article set a new standard in the Monteverdi studies, which remains valuable until the present day. Vogel was the first scholar after Davari to consistently use the name Monteverdi instead of Monteverde, as was customary until then. His argument was that Monteverdi signed all his letters with this spelling. Something he did not remark is that the surname was always written in lowercase and never with a capital M. Thanks to Vogel's research, there was no longer any doubt about the date of birth nor the status of Monteverdi's father. Also, the inexplicable aberration that Marc'Antonio Ingegneri would have been maestro di cappella at the Mantuan court, was debunked by him.<sup>62</sup>

He clarified that Monteverdi was Ingegneri's apprentice before entering the Mantua service. The year of entrance at court, mistaken even by Davari, has been corrected by Vogel deducted from known facts. If he had entered in 1589, Monteverdi would have addressed his new patron in his dedication to the second book of Madrigals (1590).

Vogel is the first author to discuss the controversy with Artusi extensively and with an understanding of the nuances of its situation. He consulted more documents, such as Ercole Bottrigari's *Aletologia*<sup>63</sup> in Bologna. To finish the war metaphor, he quotes this unpublished treatise with a fierce characterisation of Monteverdi.

"... Er ist ja ein Mann der viel weiß und viel kann, er wird sich mit Klugheit und Tapferkeit vertheidigen und wird die Bodenlose Kühnheit und Arroganz jenes Mannes niederschlagen, der da verlangt man solle sich seinen Vorschriften unterordnen, während er selbst thut was ihm gefällt."

("... He is a man who knows a lot and can do a lot, he will defend himself with wisdom and bravery and will defeat the bottomless boldness and arrogance of the man who demands that one should submit to his rules because he does as he pleases.")

---

<sup>58</sup> Stefano Davari, *Notizie biografiche del distinto maestro di musica Claudio Monteverdi desunte dai documenti dell'Archivio Storico Gonzaga*. Atti della R. Accademia Virgiliana. (Mantova, Mondovi, 1885).

<sup>59</sup> Emil Vogel, "Claudio Monteverdi. Leben, Wirken im Lichte der zeitgenössischen Kritik und Verzeichniss seiner im Druck erschienenen Werke", diss. Berlin, 1887.

<sup>60</sup> Vogel, same title in *Vierteljahrsschrift für Musikwissenschaft* - 3, 1887. pp. 315 – 450.

<sup>61</sup> See p.44 of Vogel's dissertation. It must have been around 1886 that he found this important source. After 138 years, the quest for the complete score is still going on, for instance, by Erwin Roebroeks, with a stipend to search in Venice.

<sup>62</sup> Vogel, *Vierteljahrsschrift*, p.317 n.6.

<sup>63</sup> *Aletologia di Leonardo Gallucio, a benigni e sinceri lettori. Lettera apologetica del C.H.B.* (Cavaliere Ercole Bottrigari) p.75.

Despite his meticulous fact-checking, Vogel also made assumptions based on common sense that were unproven. For instance, there is still an echo of all those who wrote about the forces on Artusi's side.

About the publication of the third book of madrigals, Vogel suggested that "...his innovations naturally aroused the strongest opposition from the theorists of the old school." Subsequently, he introduced Artusi 'among the opponents' but mentioned no other names. Also, the loss of his 'irreplaceable' wife, Claudia Cattaneo, is said to have shocked the entire court in Mantua, which is Vogel's interpretation of a letter that was sent by Federico Follino to order Claudio's return and starting to work on a new opera. According to Vogel, her death had caused the greatest pain to her loved ones. Their boys, Francesco (6) and Massimiliano (3), must have missed their mother very much. However, Claudio has not even left one line that tells us what he felt for her. After his wife's death, the only times he mentions her name are in letters referring to her pension and via his father, the problem that he stood alone in taking care of his children.

"...senza la provisione della sig.<sup>ra</sup> Claudia, con doi filiolini poveri cosí lassati nella morte di lei alle spalle sue, ..."

(...without the provision of signora Claudia, with two poor sons after her death, left like that on his shoulders..)<sup>64</sup>

Before Vogel, no one had shown so much genuine interest in Monteverdi since his death. He undertook enormous work to get the fullest possible overview of his life and works, putting truthfulness above all else. This included the articulation of uncertainties, where previous historians allowed themselves judgments on the basis of limited context.

The relentless distress caused by Gonzaga's failing payments and shortage of rewards meets with Vogel's comprehension, and he does not see it as an exaggeration of begging letters like many authors still do. Vogel tended to the other side:

"Aus allen seinen Beschwerden leuchtet doch nur seine unendlich liebevolle Sorgfalt für das Wohl und Gedeihen seiner Familie hervor- ein Characterzug der sich in den meisten seiner uns erhalten gebliebenen Briefe offenbart und oft geradezu rührender Weise hervortritt." (In all his complaints, the only thing that shines through is his infinitely loving care for the well-being and prosperity of his family - a trait that is revealed in most of his surviving letters and often emerges in a downright touching way.)<sup>65</sup>

## **Rolland**

The French writer, Nobel Prize winner and great intellectual spirit of his time, Romain Rolland, initially wanted to become a musician. His parents did not agree with such a future. His understanding of music contributed nevertheless generously to his influence on several cultural movements, such as the revival of music from the past.

---

<sup>64</sup> Letter by Baldassare Monteverdi to Eleonora de Medici, duchess of Mantua, 27 November 1608, (Fabbri, 1985) p. 148.

<sup>65</sup> Vogel, *Vierteljahrsschrift*, p. 341

In this light, it is significant that his doctorate thesis<sup>66</sup> was a profound study of the rise of European opera in the early Baroque period. He must have done a substantial part of his research when residing at the École Française in Rome. Also, his encounters with the revolutionary Malwida von Meysenbug, a close friend of Nietzsche and Wagner, opened his horizon and understanding of cultural context, enriching his philological and musicological commitment. After two years, he returned to settle in Paris and completed a doctorate in the faculty of *Lettres*. It was the second dissertation on music in France<sup>67</sup> that we now consider the beginning of musicology as an academic discipline. The emancipation of musicology is characterised by Pierre Aubry, from the *Institut catholique de Paris*, when he wrote in 1899:

"L'histoire de la musique n'appartient plus aux musiciens qui ne sont que des musiciens [...]. La science contemporaine [...] enlève aux praticiens la partie scientifique de leur art pour la confier soit aux philologues, soit aux historiens, soit aux philosophes et aux savants. Nous appellerons musicologie l'ensemble de ces diverses manifestations de la science musicale."<sup>68</sup>

(The history of music no longer belongs to musicians, who are only musicians [...] Modern science [...] takes away from practitioners the scientific part of their art and entrusts it to philologists, historians, philosophers and scholars. We will call musicology the sum total of these various manifestations of the science of music.)

Rolland's influence in this field was decisive and soon stretched over Europe, illustrated by his organisation of the international *Congrès d'Histoire de la musique de Paris* in 1900, the first of its kind in France.<sup>69</sup>

In his thesis, Rolland dedicated a whole chapter to Claudio Monteverdi and positioned him in the context of the social and artistic developments of his time. He used Vogel's article and sometimes borrowed interpretations of the German scholar. But as a writer, his imagination was inclined to fiction without the exactitude of supporting facts. This is clear when discussing Monteverdi's love and care for his family. He describes the "racking worries" in 1607, the "cruel" illness of his young wife Claudia, whom he loved "tenderly," and her "languishing for more than a year" before it became fatal to her. Actually, we do not know whether her disease lasted the whole year, only that she had been severely ill in the fall of 1606.

There is conclusive evidence, however, that Monteverdi did a lot to ensure both his sons were well off. In his letters, we find proof, for instance, that the 23-year-old Massimiliano, a young doctor in medicine, was imprisoned because he had read a book on the forbidden list of the Inquisition.<sup>70</sup> Claudio tried to use his contacts in Mantua, such as Alessandro Striggio,

---

<sup>66</sup> Romain Rolland, *Les origines du théâtre lyrique moderne. Histoire de l'opéra en Europe avant Lully et Scarlatti*. diss., Paris, 1895.

<sup>67</sup> The first French thesis was by Jules Combarieu, who like Emil Vogel had studied with Philipp Spitta. *Le Rapport de la poésie et de la musique considérée du point de vue de l'expression*, diss. Paris, 1894.

<sup>68</sup> Danièle Pistone, "Romain Rolland face à la musicologie de son temps", *Cahiers de Brèves*, no.29, June 2012. p. 28.

<sup>69</sup> *idem*, p.29.

<sup>70</sup> See Rolland, *Les origines*, p.90 n2; Denis Stevens, *Letters* (1980) nrs.115-119, pp. 380-393.



to react to a letter by the 'Father Inquisitor' saying that he could get his son released by paying a bail of 100 ducats until the case was dispatched.

Surprisingly, Rolland allowed himself in his dissertation obvious sloppiness in using previous studies. Vogel's accuracy contrasts sharply with Rolland's nonchalance.

On page 84 of his thesis, he gives "Monteverdi né en 1568 à Crémone..." and on the same page "Claudio Johannes Antonius Monteverde, né à Crémone au commencement de mai 1567..." This latter information is clearly taken from Vogel's article. On the next page, the librettist of *Orfeo* is identified as Alessandro Striggio. But two pages further, Rolland shifts into a poetic mode and suggests Rinuccini as the author of *l'Orfeo*, possibly confusing the opera with *l'Euridice* by Peri.

Contemplating the suffering of "*Orphée*", he sees analogies with Monteverdi's own life in the year of creation:

*"...(ces successions si hardies et d'une expression si moderne), son angoisse déchirante qui devine aux premiers mots la terrible nouvelle que le messenger n'ose dire, et qu'il n'ose pas entendre, ramènent involontairement l'esprit aux propres inquiétudes de l'artiste. On croirait que Rinuccini a écrit à son adresse ces consolations prématurées dont Apollon caresse l'âme meurtrie de son poète, réfugié dans son art, arraché de la terre vers les cieux immortels.<sup>71</sup>*

(these bold sequences, so modern....his heart-rending anguish as he guesses at the first words of the terrible news that the messenger does not dare to tell, and that he does not dare to hear, involuntarily brings the mind back to the artist's own worries. One would think that Rinuccini had written for him those premature consolations with which Apollo caresses the bruised soul of his poet, who has taken refuge in his art, torn from the earth towards the immortal heavens.)

It is very hard to understand that the persistent error (from Burney? see above) about Marc'Antonio Ingegneri's presumed function as '*maestro di capella*' at the Gonzaga court still survived in Rolland's thesis. Monteverdi's teacher is named as such on page 85, in relation to the formation of the boy, but bluntly contradicted a few pages later (*Il fut maître de chapelle du duc de Mantoue*), despite Vogel's explicit falsification.

But at the other end of the spectrum, on the literary side, Rolland often delves into Monteverdi's specific position among his contemporaries. He emphasises the musical freedom that Monteverdi achieved, contrasting it with his Florentine colleagues by his dedication to practising his instrument day and night to explore its effects. What Artusi mocked is viewed by Rolland as transcending vocal boundaries. While the justness – (did he mean accuracy?) - of the recitative may suffer slightly and the structure of the poetry may be overlooked, a direct connection between souls is established (*l'âme parle directement à l'âme*).<sup>72</sup>

---

<sup>71</sup> Rolland, *Les origines*, p.87.

<sup>72</sup> *Idem*, p.92.

"Ainsi l'observation et l'« imitation » des passions (non pas seulement de la parole passionnée) est l'essence de la musique nouvelle. Elle ne s'attache donc pas servilement au texte, mais elle lit au fond de sa pensée."

(And thus, the observation and "imitation" of passions (not just passionate speech) is the essence of new music. It does not slavishly stick to the text but reads into the bottom of its thought.)

These descriptions are the kind that Danièle Pistone meant by his observation about the literary approach of Rolland to describe his subject; "*Si le langage n'y est pas dépourvu de termes techniques, le ton très littéraire est toutefois celui de l'émotion personnelle, riche de métaphores empruntées au domaine religieux.*" (While the language is not devoid of technical terms, the very literary tone is one of personal emotion, rich with metaphors borrowed from the religious sphere.)<sup>73</sup>

In the context of Monteverdi's dramatic use of instruments, Rolland refers in a footnote to a concert he attended in the year before his dissertation came out. In December 1893, the first of a series *concerts historiques* was organised by Charles Bordes, the founding father (together with a.o. Vincent d'Indy) of the Schola Cantorum Paris. Bordes had an aria sung from *Orfeo* with an exposition of the rich instrumentation, which must have been *Possente spirto* ("le fameux air d'Orphée"). Though he admits that these curiosities of instrumentation can still be felt today, he sees here a loss of unity in the dramatic impression.

Rolland was attentive to the dramatic impact of Monteverdi's work and had been reading his reflections in the extant letters. His analysis of what determines the extra dimensions this composer added to a storyline and narrative compared to his colleagues is summarised when Monteverdi discussed in a letter his opera *La finta pazza Licori*.<sup>74</sup>

*La musique va jusqu'au fond du cœur, et ne s'en tenant pas à la seule impression passagère éveillée par le mot, elle prête l'oreille aux sentiments plus qu'aux paroles du personnage; elle tient compte « de son passé et de son avenir, » comme dit Monteverde, c'est-à-dire de son caractère général; et nous voici bien près du leit-motiv moderne, où se résume une âme, que l'on voit vivre et se transformer au cours d'une action dramatique.*

(The music goes right to the bottom of the heart and does not confine itself to the mere passing impression awakened by the word; it lends its ear to the feelings more than to the words of the character. It takes into account "his past and his future," as Monteverde puts it, that is to say, his general character; and here we are very close to the modern *leitmotiv*, which sums up a soul that we see living and transforming itself in the course of a dramatic action).

In July 1891, Malvida von Meysenbug took Rolland to Bayreuth on his way back from Rome to Paris. Seeing *Parsifal*, *Tristan*, and *Tannhäuser* together made a huge impression on him, and he saw analogies with the Italian beginnings of music drama, such as the role of the text, the silent audience, the hidden orchestra and the way human passions were exposed.

---

<sup>73</sup> Pistone, *Romain Rolland*, p.30.

<sup>74</sup> Rolland, *Les origines*, p.93. The opera was abandoned before completion.

Rolland's passion for Richard Wagner's music drama explains his association with the idea of *Leitmotiv*. For instance, Arianna's sighing motive when she directly addresses Theseus (*O Teseo, o Teseo mio*), which I believe indeed functions not just as a refrain but also as a point of reference on which the audience subconsciously orients the dramatic development.

### **D'Annunzio, the narrative of decadentismo**

It was during this period, at the turn of the century, that Romain Rolland played a decisive role in the changing narrative about Monteverdi and the true discovery of his music.

When Rolland was back in Rome in 1897, he was invited on 9 May to the salon of the Contessa Ersilia Caetani-Lovatelli to meet Gabriele D'Annunzio.<sup>75</sup> This influential dandy poet had an immediate interest in the young musicologist, and right from the start of their acquaintance, they profoundly explored their common interests. D'Annunzio had a great passion for music, but as Rolland puts it later in his correspondence, he made people believe that he was much more knowledgeable than he was. While working on his novel *Il Fuoco*, he absorbed the ideas and expertise of his new friend on the rise of opera in Florence and his ideas about Wagner. Clearly, the poet had not read Rolland's book *L'Histoire de l'Opera en Europe*, although it had come on the market at the end of 1895. But many of the Frenchman's views will have passed through conversation, mainly and reportedly so in the summer of 1899, when they spent holidays together in the hotel Waldstätterhof, Brunnen, Switzerland.

Rolland's knowledge (and very likely his enthusiasm) thus inseminated the final version of *Il Fuoco*, as shown in an ecstatic dialogue about the outstanding achievements of Caccini, Peri and Emilio de Cavalieri. Their way of presenting the whole human being in their musical drama (*manifestare con tutti i mezzi dell'arte l'uomo integro*)<sup>76</sup> had been interpreted very much in the same vein as this was done in Bayreuth. The passage makes D'Annunzio's nationalism explicit and shows his wish to let Italian superiority retroactively compete with Germany of his present day. In this context, Monteverdi is introduced in the novel as a hero and saviour:<sup>77</sup>

*"Bisogna glorificare il più grande degli innovatori, che la passione e la morte consacrarono veneziano, colui che ha il sepolchro nella chiesa dei Frari, degno d'un pellegrinaggio: il divino Claudio Monteverde."*

(We must glorify the greatest of innovators, he who is anointed a Venetian by his passion and death, whose tomb is in the Frari church, worthy of a pilgrimage: the divine Claudio Monteverde).

---

<sup>75</sup> Emilio Mariano, *Gabriele d'Annunzio e Eleonora Duse ovvero dal Fuoco alle laudi*, a cura di Maria Rosa Giacom, (Venice, Edizioni Ca' Foscari, 2016) p.124.

<sup>76</sup> Gabriele D'Annunzio, *Il Fuoco*, (Milan, Fratelli Treves, 1900) p.160.

<sup>77</sup> D'Annunzio, *Il Fuoco*, p.161.

The nationalistic atmosphere is endorsed by the following conversation of characters that D'Annunzio, as most of them in *Il Fuoco*, moulded after real people of his inner circle:<sup>78</sup>

- *"Ecco un'anima eroica, di pura essenza italiana! - assenti Daniele Glàuro (Angelo Conti) con reverenza.*

- *Egli compì l'opera sua nella tempesta, amando, soffrendo, combattendo, solo con la sua fede, con la sua passione e col suo genio - disse la Foscarina (Eleonora Duse) lentamente, come assorta nella visione di quella vita dolorosa e coraggiosa che aveva nutrito del più caldo suo sangue le creature della sua arte. -"*

(- "Here is a heroic soul, of pure Italian essence! - confirmed Daniele Glàuro with admiration.

- He accomplished his work in the storm, loving, suffering, fighting, only with his faith, his passion and his genius,' said Foscarina slowly, as if absorbed in the vision of that painful and courageous life that had nourished the creatures of his art with its warmest blood. -")

The scene turns from a discussion into a theatrical mode when La Foscarina encourages Stelio (D'Annunzio) to tell about Monteverde. His telling captures the imagination to such an extent that the composer actually appears in the dining room:

*"L'antico sonator di viola, vedovo ardente e triste come l'Orfeo della sua favola, apparve nel cenacolo. Fu un'apparizione di fuoco assai più fiera e più abbagliante di quella che aveva acceso il bacino di San Marco: una infiammata forza di vita, espulsa dall'imo grembo della natura verso l'anzi delle moltitudini; una veemente zona di luce, erotta da un cielo interiore e rischiarare i fondi più segreti della volontà e del desiderio umano; un inaudito verbo, emerso dal silenzio originario a esprimere quel che v'è di eterno e di eternamente indicibile nel cuore del mondo."*

(The ancient viola player, a fiery and sad widower like the Orfeo of his fable, appeared in the cenacle. It was an apparition of fire far prouder and more dazzling than that which had entered the basin of St Mark's: an inflamed force of life, ejected from the womb of nature towards the anxiety of the multitudes; a vehement zone of light, erupted from an inner sky and illuminated the most secret depths of the human will and desire; an unheard word, emerging from the original silence to express what is eternal and eternally unspeakable in the heart of the world.)

Then the poet asks the audience, 'Should we speak of him if he himself could speak to us?.' He means that it is infinitely more telling to hear the music composed by Monteverdi. The following scene still evokes an almost spiritistic seance, now with real music. The singer that appears in *Il Fuoco* as Donatella Arivale was, in reality, Giulietta Gordigiani, a very beautiful rising star and close friend of Eleonora Duse. At the beginning of the novel, she is

---

<sup>78</sup> The figure of Daniele Glàuro was based on Angelo Conti, an art historian and writer who, at the time, was the director of the Galleria dell'Accademia di Belle Arti in Venice.

La Foscarina is moulded after D'Annunzio's partner of those years, the famous actress Eleonora Duse (1858-1924), with whom he had a stormy relationship. She was the Italian equivalent of Sarah Bernhardt. The intrigue of her relationship was exposed in *Il Fuoco*.

announced to be soon performing Arianna, but in this scene, Donatella appears as an anonymous ghost of the mythological Arianna.

(For reasons of brevity, only the English translation is given in the following passage of *Il Fuoco*.)

"And he gazed at the singer, and he saw her as when she had first appeared to him in the pauses, among the forest of instruments white and lifeless as a shadow. But the spirit of beauty which they had invoked was to manifest itself through her.

'Ariadne', Stelio added in a low voice as if to awaken her.

She rose without speaking, went to the door, and entered the neighbouring room. They heard the rustle of her skirts, her light footfall, and the sound of the cembalo being opened. All were quiet and intent. A musical silence seemed to occupy the place that had remained empty in the supper room. Once, only a breath of wind slanted the candle flames, disturbing the flowers. Then all became anxious again and motionless in expectation.

" *Lasciatemi morire !* "

Suddenly their souls were ravished by a power that seemed the lightning-like eagle by which Dante in his dream was ravished up to the flame. They were burning together in undying truth; they heard the world's melody pass through their luminous ecstasy.

" *Lasciatemi morire !* "

Was it Ariadne, still Ariadne, who was weeping in some new pain? rising, still rising, to new height in her martyrdom?

*E che volete*

*Che mi conforte*

*In cosi dura sorte.*

*In cosi gran martire?*

*Lasciatemi morire"*

The voice ceased; the singer did not reappear. The aria of Claudio Monteverde composed itself in the memory like a changeless feature.

" Is there any Greek marble that has reached a simpler and securer perfection of style? " said Daniele Glauro in a low voice, as if he feared to disturb the silence, which was still ringing with the music.

" But what sorrow on earth has ever wept like this?" stammered Lady Myrta, her eyes full of tears that ran down the furrows of her poor, bloodless face while her hands, deformed by gout, trembled as they wiped them away.<sup>79</sup>

---

<sup>79</sup> "The Flame of Life" English translation by Cassandra Vivaria, Boston, L.C. Page, 1900. pp. 114-115

Because the 'voi' is also missing here (see above: *E che volete voi*), D'Annunzio likely had a score of the *Arie Antiche* by Parisotti. Even more likely, he knew the score and Giulietta Gordigiani once performed the lamento for him. The contact was intimate, but she disappeared (*la cantatrice non riapparve*)<sup>80</sup> from his life when she married Baron Robert von Mendelssohn in 1899, a descendant of Felix Mendelssohn, a cellist and a wealthy banker. The couple settled down in Berlin, where they lived until Mendelssohn's death (1917), in close contact with a large circle of famous musicians.<sup>81</sup> It is very well possible that Giulietta witnessed the concert in 1908, where the Berliner Philharmoniker performed the *Lamento* with the slender-toned singing soprano Julia Culp (see above) as a soloist.

### The 20<sup>th</sup>-century breakthrough

Admiration for Monteverdi, labelled as a proto-Wagnerian composer, coloured his music's revival just partly. Rolland had started this associative narrative, which d'Annunzio used to disseminate his ideology of Mediterranean superiority. But Rolland was from the beginning convinced of Monteverdi's unique qualities, judging it with the same criteria as he did with the music of his contemporaries. He was not looking for a hybrid romantic style for the inventor of opera but searched for the essence of his output. The challenge was to bring the dormant scores of Monteverdi's dramatic music to life, even though they were an incomplete representation of the actual musical and dramatic compass.

Musicology was needed to start a work of reconstruction, and Berlin delivered much more in that field than as a stage for sounding rediscoveries. For decades, Paris would prove to have the most fertile cultural soil for such initiatives. The fruits of Emil Vogel's thorough investigations in Italy and the subsequent intelligent interpretation of these findings resulted in the possibility of performing the complete *Lamento d'Arianna* and not only its first page.<sup>82</sup> Rolland had started a cooperation with the composer Vincent d'Indy, who was leading the Paris Schola Cantorum, to prepare new performances of Monteverdi's music, just as the school had done with Lully and Rameau. When d'Indy was working on a lecture performance in October 1902, he received a letter in which Rolland suggested performing next to fragments of *Orfeo*, the lamento, at least partly because it was the most famous and most perfect of Monteverdi's pieces.<sup>83</sup>

He warned, however, that the piece in its entirety could risk being monotonous.

*"Il est un peu trop long, pour pouvoir être donné, sans une impression de monotonie qui détruirait l'émotion du début. Mais peut-être pourrait-on exécuter une partie."*

(It is a little too long to be given without an impression of monotony, which would destroy the emotion of the beginning. But perhaps part of it could be performed.)

Two months later the lamento would be successfully performed in Paris by the young Italian soprano Mlle. Palasara, enthusiastically reviewed by Romain Rolland in the *Revue Musicale*

---

<sup>80</sup> Mariano, *Gabriele d'Annunzio*, p.33,

<sup>81</sup> Such as Joseph Joachim, Adolf Busch, Edwin Fischer, Carl Flesch, Karl Klingler, Vladimir Horowitz, Gregor Piatigorsky, Rudolf Serkin, Pau Casals, Arthur Schnabel, Eugene Ysaÿe, Bruno Eisner. The latter might have introduced the scientist Albert Einstein as violinist, with whom he would later play trios together with Giulietta's son Francesco, a cellist like his father.

<sup>82</sup> See above footnote 56.

<sup>83</sup> *"C'est la plus célèbre page de Monteverde, peut-être la plus parfait..."*, autographes de Romain Rolland, Bernard Duchatelet, 2018, p. 83: [www.association-romainrolland.org](http://www.association-romainrolland.org),

of December that year.<sup>84</sup> He had published two fragments from *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*<sup>85</sup> in the same journal to show the comic side of Monteverdi's dramatic work. He must have copied these by hand in Venice when he visited the library of San Marco on his way to Bayreuth.<sup>86</sup> This first confrontation with Wagner's operas left a very deep imprint on the young Rolland, and it certainly explains the shared admiration in fiery discussions he had later with Gabriele d'Annunzio.

Similar inspiration may have worked in his contact with Vincent d'Indy, who was also a dedicated Wagnerian since he had witnessed the complete *Ring des Nibelungen* in 1876 at the inauguration of the Festspielhaus in Bayreuth. Despite their differences, particularly in politics but also more generally in the appreciation of art, d'Indy and Rolland were soul mates in their view of Wagnerian potential qualities in Monteverdi's stage works. Rolland's thesis from 1895 must have triggered the attention by its repetitive references to Wagner.

"...on reconnaît encore l'artiste de la race de Wagner, le musicien dont le but est bien précisément l'action dramatique, et non pas la musique."<sup>87</sup>

(...one recognises the artist of Wagner's kind, the musician whose goal is precisely the dramatic action and not the music.)

D'Indy did not read Rolland's thesis very thoroughly because he quoted freely in his Schola Cantorum lectures, compiled in the third volume of *Cours de Composition Musicale* by a former scholar, Guy de Lioncourt. In this narrative, Artusi was mistakenly labelled one of the Camerata dei Bardi;

'Monteverdi subit des critiques acerbes de la part des Florentins. Artusi, l'un des littérateurs à la solde de Bardi, relate en ces termes la première représentation d'*Orfeo* "On entend un mélange de sons, une diversité de voix, une rumeur harmonique insupportable aux sens. L'un chante vite, l'autre lentement; l'un va à l'aigu, l'autre tombe au grave; un 3<sup>e</sup> n'est ni grave ni aigu; tel chante selon la méthode harmonique, tel autre selon l'arithmétique. Comment voulez-vous que l'esprit se reconnaisse dans ce tohu-bohu d'impressions?"<sup>88</sup>

("Monteverdi was harshly criticised by the Florentines. Artusi, one of Bardi's literary henchmen, wrote of the first performance of *Orfeo*: "One hears a mixture of sounds, a diversity of voices, a harmonic rumble unbearable to the senses. One sings quickly, another slowly; one goes high, another low; a 3rd is neither low nor high; one sings according to the harmonic method, another according to the arithmetical method. How do you expect the mind to recognise itself in this hodge-podge of impressions?")

---

<sup>84</sup> Romain Rolland, *La Revue Musicale*, 2, Nr. 12, December 1902. p.539.

<sup>85</sup> *La Revue Musicale*, 3, No. 4, 4 April 1903, pp. 190-193.

<sup>86</sup> Rolland was invited by his friend Malwida von Meysenbug to attend Wagner performances before returning to Paris. See also Johannes Boer, "Ignition-year 1900, Claudio Monteverdi between revival and decadentismo." in: (Fabris, Dinko and Anna Tedesco, eds), *La riscoperta di Monteverdi nel XX secolo. Musica antica, ricezione e pratica della messinscena*, proceedings of the Seminar at Fondazione Levi, Venice, 22-24 settembre 2022, special issue of *Musica e storia*, n.s., I, 2024 (in preparation).

<sup>87</sup> Quoted by Annegret Fauser, "Archéologue malgré lui: Vincent d'Indy et les usages de l'histoire." In: Vincent d'Indy et son temps. *Musique/Musicologie*, Sprimont, Mardaga, 2006. p. 128.

<sup>88</sup> Vincent d'Indy, *Cours de Composition musicale*, Troisième livre, rédigé par Guy de Lioncourt d'après les notes prises aux classes de la Schola Cantorum. (Paris, Durand, 1912 /reprint 1950) p. 26.

Another proof of d'Indy's sloppiness in consulting *Les Origines du Théâtre Lyrique moderne*, is that he missed the fact that Artusi was a priest at the Congregation of the Saviour in Bologna.<sup>89</sup> If the *Cours* were based on notes taken between 1897 and 1898, during d'Indy's lessons in the Schola Cantorum, the responsible students or their teacher must have been drowsy. The *Cours* Vol. 3 consists of some random mixtures of quotes from Rolland, like the one above, which he did not connect to *Orfeo* at all. Another surprising quote is more accurate on d'Indy's side but concerns a Wagnerian projection by Rolland himself, which, even as a free interpretation of the *Dichiaratione*, is farfetched. It sounds very much like the kind of populism that Rolland endorsed.

*Les hommes de science protestent au nom de Platon, que le peuple se trompe et ne saurait juger. Non, le peuple a raison, et s'il contredit l'élite, c'est à l'élite à se taire.*<sup>90</sup>

(Men of science protest in the name of Plato that the people are wrong and cannot judge. No, the people are right, and if they contradict the elite, it is up to the elite to keep quiet.)

In this case, the elite is represented by the academic world, which, as noticed by Annegret Fauser, meant a high degree of identification for Vincent d'Indy. The shared opposition to the academic world was even more than 'slightly veiled in the discourse,' as she puts it.<sup>91</sup> After Padre Martini and Charles Burney, d'Indy discovered new fictive enemies that would have fought Monteverdi.

'Mais bientôt, frappé par la sécheresse du style résultant des théories florentines, il se prit de querelle avec Caccini et se libéra violemment de la tutelle des Académies, qui lui décernèrent alors à l'unanimité un brevet d'ignorance.'

(But soon, struck by the dryness of style resulting from Florentine theories, he quarrelled with Caccini and violently freed himself from the tutelage of the Academies, which then unanimously awarded him a patent of ignorance.)<sup>92</sup>

Obviously, d'Indy lacked the musicological rigour to offer an alternative for the existing institutions and academia he had been criticising. In the educational field, he had high ambitions to initiate changes, and he was part of a committee with a mandate from the 'Ministre de l'Instruction Publique et des Beaux-Arts' to reform the Conservatoire.<sup>93</sup> A rejection from the Paris Conservatoire of his plans for innovation resulted in the foundation of the Schola Cantorum Paris in 1894, together with the organist Alexandre Guilmant and choir conductor Charles Bordes, the principal until d'Indy took over in 1904 (see above).

The Schola embodied the ideology that young composers should learn from analysing great works from the past. After 1900, not just analysis but, on the contrary, increasingly realising these compositions in performance became a way to understand the artistic essence of ancient masters better. A long list of masterworks by half or entirely forgotten composers was excavated and performed in monthly concerts. Predominantly, the French cultural

---

<sup>89</sup> Rolland, *Les origines*, p.102.

<sup>90</sup> Rolland, *Les Origines*, p. 101. Quoted by d'Indy in *Cours*, Vol 3, p.26.

<sup>91</sup> Fauser, *Archéologue*, p. 131.

<sup>92</sup> D'Indy, *Cours*, Vol 3, p. 25.

<sup>93</sup> Jann Pasler, "Deconstructing d'Indy, or the Problem of a Composer's Reputation," *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music*, 30/3, (Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2007) p. 240.



heritage was restored, and Rameau, Lully, Charpentier, Clément, and Couperin were regularly sounding in the Salle Érard of the school. But Johann Sebastian Bach was probably the best-represented composer of all, and many cantatas and concertos or chamber works alternated in the concert series with the large-scale lineups of oratorios and the B-minor Mass.

This repertoire was all preserved in printed scores (old and new) and manuscripts with sufficient information about which notes were supposed to sound and when. For Monteverdi's dramatic work, however, reconstruction was needed with a thorough understanding of the early 17<sup>th</sup>-century Italian monodic style. That knowledge was not yet sufficiently available, certainly not to accomplish a reconstruction from an unfigured bass in the bold and unpredictable harmonic language of Monteverdi. In the preface of his 1905 edition of the *Orfeo*, Vincent d'Indy states that the realisation of the basso continuo is done with '*le plus grand respect*' for style. Despite the respect, d'Indy worked out a regularly modernising solution for the recitatives after being encouraged by Romain Rolland to consult a transcription by Robert Eitner.<sup>94</sup> In the letter quoted above (footnote 76), Rolland refers to this transcription, used by d'Indy to make his arrangement. Eitner's edition had a scholarly purpose rather than performative, and Rolland approved the accurate transcription but had severe doubts about the 'harmonic fantasies' of the German musicologist, which were apparently a point of discussion in a previous letter by d'Indy. Rolland wrote: "One is confronted with strange disappointments when taking a closer look at the impressive German science."<sup>95</sup>

However, d'Indy's opinion about Eitner's work was formulated explicitly only later, in 1915, when he released an orchestral score of his own arrangements:

Mon but n'est pas de présenter un *fac simile* de la partition originale traduite en notation moderne; ce travail a déjà été fait assez exactement quant à la sincérité du texte, quoi qu'avec une parfaite absence de goût et une lourdeur bien allemandes, par Robert Eitner. Un document de ce genre intéressant peut-être pour les archéologues, eut été de nulle utilité pour les artistes.<sup>96</sup>

(My aim is not to present a facsimile of the original score translated into modern notation; this work has already been done quite accurately as far as the sincerity of the text is concerned, albeit with a perfect lack of taste and a very German heaviness, by Robert Eitner. A document of this kind, interesting perhaps for archaeologists, would have been of no use to artists.)

A simple explanation for Eitner's twisted harmonic passages is his effort to produce plausible constructions in the basso continuo realisation along the tonality-rules of later periods, which did not exist in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>97</sup> So, in that sense, d'Indy

---

<sup>94</sup> Robert Eitner, *Die Oper von ihren ersten Anfängen bis zur Mitte des 18. Jahrhunderts*, (Leipzig, Breitkopf & Härtel, 1881).

<sup>95</sup> '*On a d'étranges déceptions quand on approche d'un peu plus près l'imposante science allemande.*' footnote 76, Duchatelet, *autographes*, p.83.

<sup>96</sup> Quoted in his dissertation by Benjamin Ernest Thorburn, *Recomposing Monteverdi: Twentieth-Century Adaptations of Monteverdi's Operas*" (PhD diss., Yale University, 2012), p. 15.

<sup>97</sup> Jane Glover has dissected some passages containing farfetched oddities in harmonisation just to keep the vocal and bass lines original. Jane Glover, "The Metamorphoses of *Orfeo*," *The Musical Times*, 116, Feb. 1975, p.135.

was right about the German approach.

But James Thorburn has pointed out that the versions d'Indy produced of *Orfeo* – in 1905 a French version with piano reduction and in 1915 in Italian with orchestral score – relied very much on Eitner's edition from 1881. Somehow, d'Indy was not aware that he contradicted himself about the uselessness of the musicologist's work for artists and performers. There is convincing evidence that the French composer did not have any other source at his disposal but Eitner's score.<sup>98</sup> Wishing to mould the drama of *Orfeo* in the direction of Wagner, d'Indy had cut off the first and the last act, but nothing appeared in his score that was not found in Eitner's edition, which was also lacking many parts of the original 1609 print.

After all the preparations were done, on 25 February 1904 at 21.00 h, the *Troisième concert mensuel* of the Schola Cantorum was dedicated to the first modern performance of Monteverdi's *Orfeo* in a French translation. Several reviews describe the exceptional event and the imaginative use of instruments by their symbolic connotations within the story. Some of them point directly to the similarities with Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, which premiered in Paris two years earlier. Apart from the transparent texture, both operas have a kinship in their French declamation.

Today, it is hard to imagine that the performing forces mounted up to 150. To understand the proportions, it is important to realise that at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the number of performers was often much higher. Even then, an atmosphere of intimacy was possible, and according to the critics, the music spoke directly to its audience. Louis Laloy remarks in his review in the *Revue Musicale* about the contrast with Gluck's *Orfeo*: 'Orpheus is a man, not a divine virtuoso.'<sup>99</sup>

In total, there are six extant reviews about this first resurrection of *Orfeo*, mostly from the inner circle of the Schola, like the conductor Julien Tiersot in his magazine *Le Ménestrel*. His observation is that the lyrical form of this *Orfeo* did not resemble the familiar styles of more ancient epochs nor of the later operas. He calls the peculiar facets of harmony, orchestration etc. at the same time '*très savant et très naïf.*'<sup>100</sup>

The success of the performance was followed by a publication of the piano reduction that d'Indy had made of his own arrangement. This was a crucial first step in the history of Monteverdi-revival because it was not intended as a complete scholarly reconstruction of the original 1609 edition (*reconstitution complète de la partition originale*) as d'Indy writes in his preface. He worked out a score for practical execution of the work in concerts. The release of the score was celebrated with a retake of the *Orphée* on 27 January 1905 in the intimacy of the Schola. Ten days later, a second (public) performance took place at the Salle Pleyel, this time conducted by d'Indy's student Francisco de Lecerda. Above all, the juvenile freshness of the performance, as well as its precision, were praised.<sup>101</sup>

Suddenly, among the many composers whose music was revived by the Paris Schola, a new voice was added that distinguished itself from the many Renaissance masters, J.S. Bach, and the French Baroque music that had been performed for some years, like Charpentier, Campra, or Rameau. With hindsight, the narrative about Monteverdi as mainly a historical figure was taken over by proof of his musical presence, thus creating a new dimension of

---

<sup>98</sup> Thorburn, *Recomposing Monteverdi*, p. 20.

<sup>99</sup> Louis Laloy, *Revue Musicale*, 4/6, 15 March 1904, p.170.

<sup>100</sup> Federico Lazzaro, "Meco trarrotti a riveder le stelle. Letture comparata delle trascrizioni novecentesche dell'*Orfeo* di Monteverdi.", Thesis, University of Milan, 2007. p. 63.

<sup>101</sup> *Revue Musicale*, 5/4, 15 February 1905, p.125.

narrative. Of course, we should see this in the context of a general revival of music from the past as cultivated by the Schola Cantorum. Nevertheless, Monteverdi's position is different thanks to the surprise of his personal dramatic language in combination with an 'open score', demanding knowledge and creativity to complete it. The performance of *Orfeo* in 1904 and the publication of the score a year later was the beginning of a chain of similar adaptations by famous composers throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Parallel to these developments, musicological and philological studies intensified the quest for the 'original' Monteverdi, while performers gradually searched a way to convince by their interpretations with the help of knowledge that was thus retrieved.

While in Paris, the *Orfeo* was prepared for performance, 20-year-old Gian Francesco Malipiero saw his first Monteverdi manuscript in the library of Venice, there titled *Nerone*, but actually *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*. In his own words<sup>102</sup> the seed was planted then for making a transcription of the complete works, which would result in the first monumental edition of a composer in Italy.

Composers often took the lead in making the material ready for performance but also grasped the opportunity to go beyond adaptation and created new work out of an interaction with the 'ghost' of the old master.<sup>103</sup> These hybrid creations were not just a station to pass towards an ultimately historical reconstruction. In recent times, some musicians classified as historical performers with great knowledge of and fluency in the style of Monteverdi's times have chosen to go a comparable, adventurous way.<sup>104</sup>

Being alive by being performed in the past 120 years, all these different aspects have led to a wide spectrum of manifestations, renewing the narrative and proliferating an immense and fertile variety around the person of Claudio Monteverdi and the implicit messages communicated by his music.

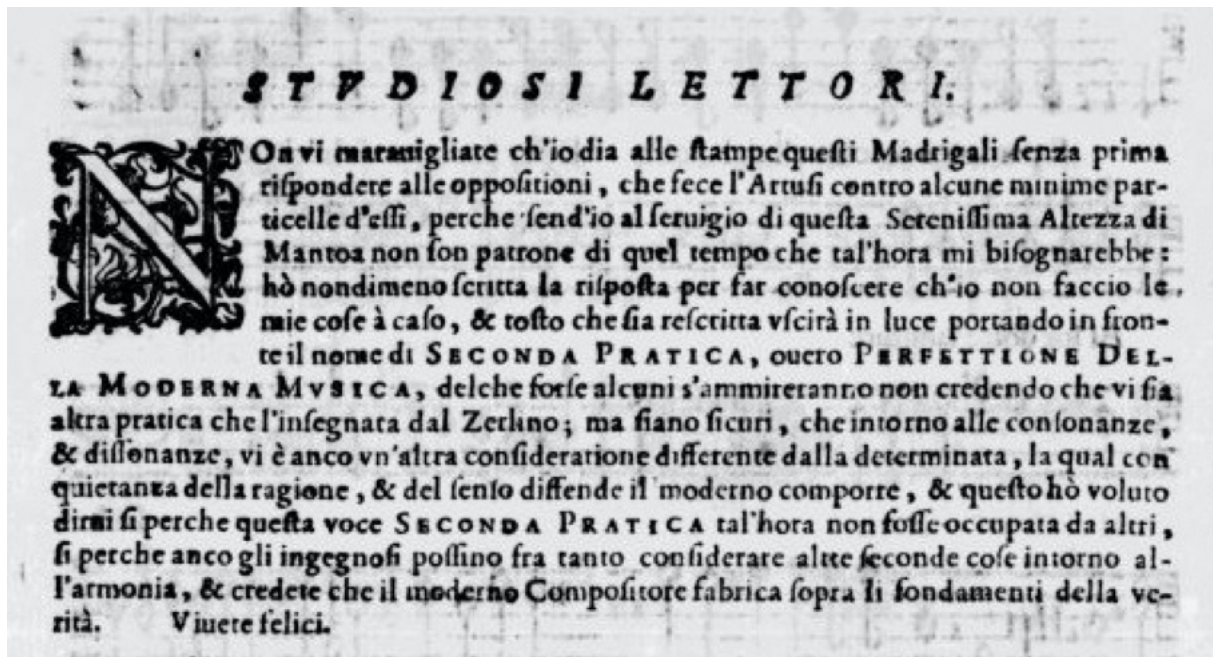
---

<sup>102</sup> Gian Francesco Malipiero, *Così parlò Claudio Monteverdi*, published on the occasion of Monteverdi's 400<sup>th</sup> birthday. (Milano, All'insegna del pesce d'oro, 1967).

<sup>103</sup> Thorburn, *Recomposing Monteverdi*, p. 5.

<sup>104</sup> Of course, the most striking example is the ensemble *l'Arpeggiata*, which has grown from an early music group into an ensemble with an identity outside the categories in the past twenty years. The mixture of early music with different styles, where jazzy or folkloristic improvisation and arrangements dominate, resulted in music played intentionally with postmodern allusions. The Monteverdi programs prioritise playfulness and leisure, detached from a lot of the stylistic agreements of the historical performance community. Other ensembles with comparable freedom of using the original material are often related to this format by one or more shared performers like Ensemble *Accordone* working with the Italian tenor Marco Beasley. This way, the practice opened a new debate about the identity of historical performance and the boundaries between entertainment and genuine historical content of early music.

## Dichiarazione



Letter to the 'Studious readers' of Claudio Monteverdi in *Madrigals* Book V, 1605.

### STVDIOSI LETTORI

Non vi marauigliate ch'io dia alle stampe questi Madrigali senza prima rispondere alle opposizioni, che fece l'Artusi contre alcune minime particelle d'essi, perche send'io al seruigio di questa Serenissima Altezza di Mantua non son patrone di quell tempo che tal'hora mi bisognarebbe; hò nondimeno scritta la riposta per far conoscer ch'io non faccio le mie cose à caso, & tosto che sia rescritta uscirà in luce portando in fronte il nome di **SECONDA PRATICA** ouero **PERFETTIONE DELLA MODERNA MUSICA**, delche forse alcuni s'ammeriranno non credendo che vi sia altra pratica, che l'insegnata dal Zerlino; ma siano sicuri, che intorno alle consonanze, & dissonanze vi è anco un'altra consideratione differente dalla determinata, la qual con quietanza della ragione, & del senso diffende il moderno comporre, & questo hò voluto dirui si perche questa voce **SECONDA PRATICA** tal'hora non fosse occupata da altri, si perche anco gli ingegnosi possino tanto considerare altre seconde cose intorno all'armonia, & credere che il moderno Compositore fabrica sopra li fondamenti della verità. Vi uete felici.

Studious readers

“Do not marvel that I am giving these madrigals to the press without first replying to the objections that L’Artusi<sup>1</sup> has brought against some very minute details in them, for being in the service of His Most Serene Highness of Mantua, I have had not at my disposal the time that would be required.

Nevertheless, to show that I do not compose my works haphazardly, I have written a reply which will appear as soon as I have revised it, bearing the title *Seconda pratica, overo Perfettione della moderna musica*.

Some, not suspecting there is any practice other than that taught by Zerlino [Zarlino], will wonder at this, but let them be assured that, with regard to the consonances and dissonances, there is still another way of considering them different from the established way, which, with satisfaction to the reason and to the senses, defends the modern method of composing. I have wished to say this to you so that the expression ‘Second Practice’ may not be appropriated<sup>2</sup> by anyone else and so that the ingenious may reflect meanwhile upon other secondary matters concerning harmony and believe that the modern composer builds upon the foundation of truth. Live happily.”<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Referring to the treatise *L’Artusi overo Delle imperfettioni della moderna musica* (Venice, Giacomo Vicenti, 1600) and *Seconda parte dell’Artusi* etc. (Venice, Giacomo Vicenti, 1603).

<sup>2</sup> Monteverdi claims the term *Seconda Pratica* knowing that he was not the only one composing thus. The term however was introduced in the *Seconda Parte dell’Artusi* (fol. 16) when quoting a letter of L’Ottuso academico: “...con tutto ciò tal forma di modulatione `e comunamente usata da tutti gli Moderni, massime che hanno abbracciata questa nova seconda pratica,...”

<sup>3</sup> Translation Tim Carter in: Carter/Fabbri, *Monteverdi*, (Cambridge 1995) p.48.

### How to read the '*lettera ai studiosi lettori*' and its defence?

The following comments on the letter published by Claudio Monteverdi as a postscript to his fifth book of madrigals and his brother's defence in the clarification of that letter in 1607 should be considered in the light of the project of *La Tragedia di Claudio M.* There has been an interesting musicological discourse since Palisca's comprehensive article in the Monteverdi Companion of 1968.<sup>4</sup> My analysis of both the letter itself, as well as its clarification are not intended to add new insights to the highly specialised studies by the named authors. On the contrary, I have been using their work to address the necessary backgrounds for my narrative while constructing the opera and mostly for the staging of the Artusi-Monteverdi conflict.

The controversy between the views of the practitioner Monteverdi and the theorist Artusi is accentuated in its polarisation for clarity in a dramaturgical sense. But certainly, underneath this theatrical stream, the epistemological quest colours my statements and selection of material '*à charge*' and '*à décharge*'.

The whole quarrel has a forensic flavour, and the remark by Bottrigari about Artusi behaving as a 'public censor' (see The Narrative, Chapter 2, p. 40.) is not just meant ironically. If we bear in mind that Monteverdi's son Massimiliano (as a 23-year-old doctor) was later imprisoned for reading a forbidden book, we realise that the times were very different than today.

Also, Monteverdi's experience of losing a court case in 1625 when trying to secure his inheritance of the house in Mantua of his late father-in-law recalls his association with a labyrinth. In a letter about the case, he quotes Socrates, saying the labyrinth is nothing but quarrelling. (see Chapters Contexts, p. 132 and The Libretto on page 124, note 37.)

To catch the 'tone' of all this quarrelling, I limited myself to sticking as much as possible to the direct sources.

What we tend to forget as readers is that the writing of both parties tacitly addresses an audience. With all its rhetoric and verbal gestures, a high level of theatrical energy is implicitly conducted to a third party that is expected to judge.

In the first analysis (*analysis* is used here in a literal meaning of loosen-up) **A**, I intend to look behind the mask of Monteverdi, just by using a direct exegesis.

In part **B**, the dramatic line-up becomes more complex with the (erudite) brother as one of the protagonists (having the great and busy maestro behind his back), who replies his opponent in a style that matches the bluntness of the attacks.

The payoff for historians is an insight into professional musicians' way of thinking and their vision of their own significance as creators.

---

<sup>4</sup> I have used Palisca's revised version in; Claude Palisca, *The Artusi-Monteverdi controversy* in the [New] *Monteverdi Companion*, New York, Norton, 1968 [repr.1985], p.127-58. The most informative further contributions to the discourse were for me: Massimo Ossi, *Divining the Oracle: Monteverdi's 'Seconda prattica*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Pierre-Henry Frangne et al. *L'Ombre de Monteverdi, la querelle de la nouvelle musique (1600-1638)*, Rennes, Presse Universitaire, 2008.; Tim Carter, "'E in rileggiendo poi le propprie note": Monteverdi Responds to Artusi?', *Renaissance Studies*, 26 (2012), 138-55.; Seth J. Coluzzi, "'Se Vedesti Qui Dentro": Monteverdi's "O Mirtillo, Mirtillo Anima Mia" and Artusi's Offence', *Music & Letters*, 94/1, (February 2013), pp. 1-37.

## A) Analysis of the *Lettera* from *Libro Quinto* 1605

1. *Do not marvel that I am giving these madrigals to the press without first replying to the objections that L'Artusi has brought*

Though the previous madrigal book (*Libro Quarto*, 1603) included one madrigal that Artusi attacked ('Anima mia, perdona'), the publication of *Libro Quinto* can be seen as a statement in itself by opening with 'Cruda Amarilli'. From this madrigal, Artusi took five examples to demonstrate what he considered violations against the rules of counterpoint and good taste as determined by Gioseffo Zarlino and, after him, generally accepted.

Monteverdi plunges into the subject without introduction, as if all his "studious readers" would know about *L'Artusi*, Artusi's condemnations in his publications of 1600 and later in 1603.

2. *...against some very minute details (minime particelle) in them, ...*

By reducing Artusi's objections to "alcune minime particelle" (a few tiny details), Monteverdi confronts him with the view of a mature practitioner. The comments by Artusi are, so to speak, automatically categorised as those from a theorist who is not entirely in touch with the musical practice and missing the point of their meaning within the whole.<sup>5</sup> Giving the madrigals without changes in the manuscript to the press stands here for making them public in a superior, confident way. Confidence may have been gained by the success of the fourth book, which after two years was already being reprinted, also in 1605.

3. *...for being in the service of His Most Serene Highness of Mantua, I have had not at my disposal the time that would be required...*

Actually, not having time to respond because of his obligations to one of the greatest patrons in the arts of his time shows Monteverdi as someone who has more important things to do than quarrelling about minor details. By adding this perspective of priorities, Artusi's arguments seem even more futile; while feigning polite willingness to have otherwise answered, Monteverdi preserves his own noble standard.

4. *...Nevertheless, to show that I do not compose my works haphazardly ('a caso'),*

From this response, we can see that Monteverdi had not only read the allegations in the '*Ragionamento Secondo*' that directly concerned his work. In the first part of *L'Artusi*, the author ridicules the practitioners by suggesting they would ignore the rules of previous theorists, and put their intervals randomly in their compositions, because for them it is enough if they make a noise according to their liking.

"...e giova alla cognitione di saper cognoscere, la natura, la propriet , e la passione degli intervalli in qual luoco particolare debbano collocati, e disposti di modo che facciano migliori

---

<sup>5</sup> See the Chapter Michael Polanyi, footnote 19.

effetto [...] che non sarebbero come essendo talhora, e per i piu delle pratici posti nelle Cantilene **a caso**; & le basta che secondo la volontà loro faccino romore."<sup>6</sup>

("...and it is useful to know the nature, the property, and the passion of the intervals in what particular place they should be placed, and arranged so that they have a better effect [...] than they would have, as they are sometimes, and for the most practical reasons, placed in the voices **at random**; and it is enough that they make a noise according to their will.)

5. *...I have written a reply which will appear as soon as I have revised it, bearing on the title page:*" Seconda pratica, overo Perfettione della moderna musica." ...

However, to demonstrate that the "minor details" are part of a greater concept that defines his style and no weak spots in the composition, Monteverdi boasts that he already has written something that, as a theoretical work, could compete with Artusi's.<sup>7</sup> This phrase is added to dress up his profile as an intellectual and knowledgeable composer and even a spokesman for the generation of composers writing in the new style. At the same time, he positions himself by this announcement with remarkable historical awareness as an essential representative of that new style.

But if anything at all, that theoretical work was certainly not nearly finished as he suggested because even thirty years later, it would not appear as a publication, despite his repeated promise.<sup>8</sup>

6. *...Some, not suspecting there is any practice other than that taught by Zerlino [Zarlino], will wonder at this...*

Monteverdi challenges Artusi's positioning of the authority of Gioseffo Zarlino (misspelling his name was probably not intentional, this was common), whose *Istitutioni Harmoniche* dominated half a century of music theory and practice.<sup>9</sup> He categorises Artusi indirectly among a minority (*alcuni* = some) that cannot believe another practice is possible than the perfection achieved by Zarlino. The Monteverdi-Artusi controversy thus became much more polarised than the arguments of both parties would justify.

7. *...but let them be assured that, with regard to the consonances and dissonances, there is still another way of considering them, different from the established way, ...*

Even though Monteverdi was arbitrarily attacked for incidentally deviating from the rules by his treatment of dissonances, in his defence, he overlooked or ignored detailed nuances that Artusi had published sixteen years earlier about the importance and various functions of

---

<sup>6</sup> *L'Artusi, Raggionamento Primo*, fol. 33v.

<sup>7</sup> Pierre-Henry Frangne et al. *L'Ombre de Monteverdi, la querelle de la nouvelle musique (1600-1638)*, (Rennes, Presse Universitaire, 2008) p. 25: 'Tardivement, Monteverdi s'engage donc dans la construction philosophique d'un équivalent aux thèses artusiennes.'

<sup>8</sup> In a letter of 22 October 1633 to Giovanni Battista Doni, as he says he would "pay his debt" by a theoretical treatise with an altered title since the first announcement. Even after his passing away, the mysterious treatise is mentioned by Caberloti in his obituary: about *Laconismo* see Chapter 5, Contexts. p. 134)

<sup>9</sup> Gioseffo Zarlino, *Le Istitutioni harmoniche*, (Venice: Francesco Sense, 1558).



dissonances.<sup>10</sup> It is clear that the theorist and the practitioner are here losing contact with each other's view and end up in miscommunication.

8. ...which, with satisfaction to the reason and to the senses, defends the modern method of composing...

Here, Monteverdi gives no explanation, not even a hint about the specific nature of that defence, though reason and senses are covered by it. Artusi's attack often included the accusation that the modern way of composing was causing confusion and offended the intellect (*ragione*) and/or the ear (*il senso*).<sup>11</sup> The fact that the role of the words (*oratione*) was decisive for the composers of the *seconda prattica* is not even mentioned in the letter, though this would have been the most appropriate place to bring it to the surface.

9. ...I have wished to say this to you so that the expression 'Second Practice' may not be appropriated(confiscated) by anyone else, ...

The reason for Monteverdi to claim this expression as his own and call his studious readers directly as witnesses, is one of the most strategic moves of the whole letter with consequences for his long-lasting reputation. The historical awareness is illustrated in the dedication of that same edition to his patron, Vincenzo Gonzaga. By the protection of the 'Prencipe', so it says, the madrigals "would live eternal life, to the shame of those tongues that had been seeking to cause death to the works of others." In this way, the madrigals of the fifth book can flourish in the embrace of the protection of one of the major patrons of the arts at the front and the announcement of the institutionalisation (through a treatise) of the modern style at the back.

10. ...and further, that the ingenious may reflect meanwhile upon (= consider) other secondary matters concerning harmony...

Monteverdi addresses intelligent and skilful colleagues with this remark and invites them to scrutinise harmonic issues in that vein after having reserved the term *seconda prattica* for himself. 'Meanwhile' (*fra tanto*) suggests that until he publishes his treatise, they can work on this second practice and, as the end of the letter confirms, eventually enrich the musical world. The characterisation '*ingenios*' might have been chosen to underline the contrast with theorists like Artusi, who obviously don't see the new possibilities.<sup>12</sup>

11. ...and believe that the modern composer builds upon the foundation of truth...

This last phrase of the letter is a rhetorical gesture directly aiming to confront Artusi with his own taunting words. The studious reader is asked to have confidence and believe there will be proof of the truthfulness of modern music. Pointing at the foundation of that music is a

---

<sup>10</sup> L'Artusi, *Seconda parte dell'Arte del contrapunto nella quale si tratta dell'utile & uso delle dissonanze* (Venice, Giacomo Vincenti, 1589). See on this item Claude Palisca, *The Artusi-Monteverdi controversy in the [New] Monteverdi Companion*, (New York, Norton, 1968 [repr.1985]) p.128.

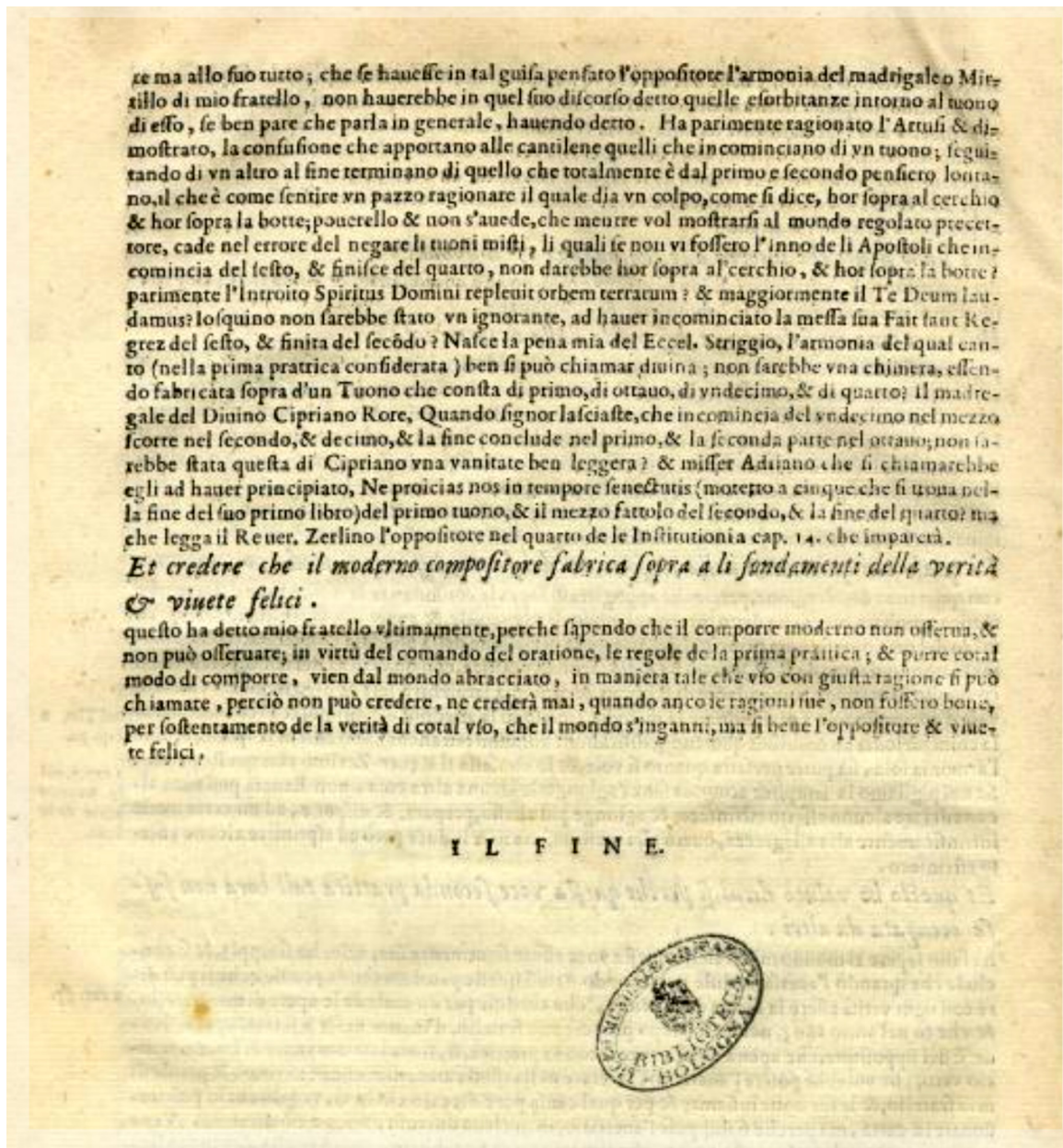
<sup>11</sup> L'Artusi, ...*Ragionamento secondo*. fol. 43v and 44v.

<sup>12</sup> As even Zarlino pointed out in his third chapter, that his approach is also the practice. See Palisca, *The Artusi-Monteverdi controversy*, p.152-153.

reaction to the allegation in one of Artusi's conclusions that "all that was put together with haste and without fundament."<sup>13</sup>

The last words refer directly to Artusi's claim of rules based on the truth (*'regole, che siano fondate sopra il vero'*).<sup>14</sup>

By concluding this message to the readers (including the opponent) with the word *verità* (truth), Monteverdi seems to have calculated its subliminal effect and let its echo resonate with the happy life he wishes all readers.



Giulio Cesare Monteverdi's defence in the postface of *Scherzi musicali*, 1607.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> L'Artusi, *Ragionamento Secondo* fol. 42 "perche sono fabriche fatte senza fondamento presto dal tempo"

<sup>14</sup> *Idem*, fol.41v.

<sup>15</sup> Claudio Monteverdi, *Scherzi Musicali a tre voci, Raccolti da Giulio Cesare Monteverde, suo Fratello, & novamente posti in luce.* (Venice, Ricciardo Amadino, 1607)

## B) Analysis of the *Dichiaratione* by Giulio Cesare Monteverdi in *Scherzi musicali*, 1607

Truth was, as he says, the main reason for Monteverdi's brother Giulio Cesare to clear him from the ongoing defamation, for instance by someone with the fake name Antonio Braccini (sic,) da Todi,<sup>16</sup> if not the priest himself, clearly from the Artusi camp. Braccini (little arms) might be an intentional pun. Misspelling of names in this controversy is often something ambiguous, as we can learn from Claudio's letters.<sup>17</sup>

Out of brotherly love, he figures as an interpreter of the very dense text of the 1605 letter in order to reinforce Claudio's defence. Two years after the publication of the letter and after the very successful performances of Monteverdi's *Orfeo*, it was apparently time for a next move in the strategy of giving Claudio's reputation a boost. And so, the *Scherzi musicali*, published in July 1607 by Giulio Cesare, are accompanied by a 'clarification of the letter.' (*Dichiaratione della lettera, stampata nel Quinto libro de' suoi Madregali*)

It is unknown how much of this explanation directly comes from Claudio himself.

1.... "Do not marvel that I am giving these madrigals to the press without first replying to the objections that L'Artusi has brought"

Giulio Cesare starts by indicating that with *L'Artusi* not the person, but the treatise is meant. An attack on the person would be below the dignity of the Monteverdi brothers, in contrast to their opponent with his treatise. Therefore, he allows himself a bit of public shaming by quoting Horace to 'not praise your own work, nor blame that of others.'

2. ...against some very minute details in them...

That the blaming by Artusi was about futile notes ('*particelle*') that in the concept of modern composing concerned only details of harmonic shaping or colouring of melody, and while the opponent upgraded them to passages ('*passaggi*'), it revealed, according to the *Dichiaratione* the ignorance in Artusi's deprecation of the madrigal at stake, 'Cruda Amarilli'.

3. ...for being in the service of His Most Serene Highness of Mantua, I have had not at my disposal the time that would be required...

The profile of Claudio is further sketched by his brother to illustrate his status as a court composer and the importance of his role. Having to curate music for both the church and the chamber as a regular occupation, there are, on top of that, extra services such as tournaments, ballets, comedies and concerts. As the last speciality, the playing of the two

---

<sup>16</sup> The lost first pamphlet by Antonio Braccino da Todi [as agreed by the scholars an alias of Artusi], who published its sequel after Giulio Cesare's reaction: *Discorso secondo musicale sopra la dichiarazione della lettera posta ne Scherzi Musicali del sig. Claudio Monteverde*, (Venice, Giacomo Vincentini, 1608).

<sup>17</sup> In his begging letters to Vincenzo Gonzaga to mobilize the non-paying treasurer Ottavio Benintendi, Monteverdi consistently named the latter Bel'Intenti (good intentions). Maybe punning with names was a family habit.

violas bastarda is listed (*concertar le due Viole bastarde*),<sup>18</sup> which was a workload and required study that probably was underestimated by the adversary.

Then Giulio Cesare put forth an important reason for his brother's late response, which goes beyond his many occupations. Claudio takes his time for everything because he is convinced that quality depends on it.<sup>19</sup> A Latin saying is presented here to pay back Artusi's frequent showing off with his own wisecracks: '*prosperantes omnia perverse agunt*' (the hasty do all things badly). Even more important is his next remark that "true virtue requires the whole man" ('la verità della virtù vol tutto l'homo'). To me, this has to be understood in a holistic way (the whole human being).<sup>20</sup> Even more needed, as the argument continues, when treating things that are barely touched by the intelligent theorists on harmony, instead of Artusi's stuff that is 'known to every blear-eyed or barber.'

#### 4. ...Nevertheless, to show that I do not compose my works haphazardly, ...

In this part of the *Dichiaratione*, an essential argument is introduced, namely the dominating role of the text. Claudio, in his letter, refrained from mentioning text (*oratione*, see above), and so Giulio Cesare is introducing a lot of arguments, including the famous phrase that was actually never written down by Claudio himself but by posterity always attributed to him: "che l'oratione sia padrona del armonia e non serva;" ("that oration (= poetic verses) will be the mistress and not the slave of harmony (=music)")

Giulio Cesare then quotes Marsilio Ficino's translation of Plato's *Republic*<sup>21</sup> to provide his defence with substantial intellectual authority. By extracting some lines, he argues that the order Plato gives is significant and determinative for the setting of music (*melodia*); "Melodia consists of three elements, text (oration), harmony and rhythm." *Oratione* is to be understood as the shaping of words with their meaning and expressive diction. He found some more lines where Plato stresses that speech itself follows the passions of the soul and that all the rest follows the text. The impudence of Artusi to present Claudio's madrigals as examples without adding their text and then criticising them is demonstrating blatant stupidity. To make his point even more clear to the reader, another generally respected authority is called in. What would happen if the madrigals of Cipriano de Rore were measured textless along the lines of the *prima prattica*? The music would appear as 'bodies without a soul.'

---

<sup>18</sup> Up to the present day, the mention of 'the' two viole bastarde remains enigmatic. It is also remarkable that after having obtained his court position through his viol playing (see preface *Terzo libro de madrigali*), by 1607 Claudio Monteverdi would have those performances still among his responsibilities. On the other hand, there are some indications that Monteverdi kept the instrumental skills which made him enter the court music. See also Bates (2002) and Seth Coluzzi, "Licks, polemics and the viola bastarda: unity and defiance in Claudio Monteverdi's Fifth Book." *Early Music*, 47/ 3, (July 2019), pp. 333-344.

<sup>19</sup> Several letters of Claudio Monteverdi refer to the lack of time to do his work properly. i.e. No. 24, 20-I-1617: "il presto con il bene insieme non conviene" (fast and good together will not match). I am using the latest critical edition available of the Letters, following the numbering adopted there: Annonciade Russo, and Jean-Philippe Navarre, *Monteverdi, Correspondance, préfaces et épîtres dédicatoires*, (Sprimont, Mardaga, 2001), p.70.

<sup>20</sup> I have my doubts about the reading of Suzanne Cusick, who, in her article, connects 'the whole man' with masculinity and builds a gender theory on it. Suzanne Cusick, "Gendering Modern Music: Thoughts on the Monteverdi-Artusi Controversy," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 46/1, (Spring, 1993), p.14.

<sup>21</sup> Marsilio Ficino, posthumous edition of Plato's opera omnia: *Omnia divini Platonis opera translatione Marsilii Ficini*, (Basel, Officina Frobeniana, 1539), p.564, ("Melodiam ex tribus constare, oration, harmonia, rhythm.") See also p.565, line 19.

Giulio Cesare continues by referring to the facts and proofs that Claudio delivered and contrasting these with his opponent's bare words. Here follows the comparison with a sick person who would have to hear the doctor orate about Hippocrates and Galen instead of obtaining his health by the practitioner's diagnosis.

The world judges the intelligence of a musician not by the twisting of his tongue on theoretical affairs but by his practice. Therefore, he says, Claudio invites his opponent (apparently by direct communication because this is not in the letter) to such a practical act. He is interested in singing and not in writing, with the single exception of the promise he made.<sup>22</sup> Here follows a listing of the composers of what he calls the *Eroica scola* (heroic school):<sup>23</sup> 'the divine Cipriano de Rore, il Signor Prencipe de Venosa (Gesualdo), Emiglio del Cavaliere, il Conte Alfonso Fontanella, il Conte di Camerata, il cavalier Turchi, il Pecci.'

5. ...I have written a reply which will appear as soon as I have revised it, bearing on the title page: *Seconda pratica*, ...

Indeed, his brother declares that Claudio announces to explain the difference between the old style and the modern music in the way consonances and dissonances function. And because this was unknown to the opponent, the truth of this matter should be made clear to everybody. Both practices are honoured, venerated and praised by Claudio.

In the first, therefore called *prima prattica*, harmony rules over the text. It was founded by the first composers who wrote 'songs in our notation'<sup>24</sup> for more than one voice.' Giulio Cesare names the following composers (his spellings): "Occeghem, Josquin de pres, Pietro della Rue, Iouan Mouton, Crequillon, Clemens non papa, Gombert & others." Master Adriano (Willaert) perfected this style in a practical way (*con l'atto prattico*) and Zerlino (sic) with the most judicious rules.

The divine Cipriano de Rore was the first to renew in mensural notation the so-called second practice, followed not only by the composers mentioned above but also "Ingegneri, Marenzo (sic), Luzzascho, Giaches Wert and likewise by Giacoppo (sic) Peri, Giulio Caccini and finally by loftier spirits with a better understanding of true art."

Claudio Monteverdi interprets this true art as the perfection of the 'melodia' by making the words in command of the harmony. He, therefore, calls this 'second' and not new and 'practice' and not 'theory' because of his practical approach in the way he uses consonances and dissonances.

6. ...overo *Perfettione della moderna musica*...

Giulio Cesare points at perfections after the authority of Plato, who wrote: "Does not music have the perfection of melody as a final goal?" Plato here again is used for an 'intellectual' justification. However, there is not much argumentation in this quote from Plato's *Gorgias*, being Socrates' question of one line only, in a large discourse about something much broader.

---

<sup>22</sup> The exception he wanted to make by writing his treatise on the *Seconda Prattica*.

<sup>23</sup> As a comparison see the reference to the heroic school that is repeated by Banchieri ("Accademie Heroiche"). Adriano Banchieri, *Conclusioni nel suono del Organo*, (Bologna, Heredi di Gio. Rossi, 1609) p.60.

<sup>24</sup> Mensural notation.

7. ...Some, not suspecting there is any practice other than that taught by Zerlino [Zarlino], will wonder at this, ...

Giulio Cesare explicitly indicates that by “some”, Artusi and his followers are intended.

This party is criticised for not even understanding the *prima prattica* completely because the nuances of Zarlino are not reflected in *L'Artusi*. Here Zarlino is quoted<sup>25</sup> to prove that he did not deny other teachings in his theoretical approach but just named the practice of master Adriano Willaert as realising the ideal. This is the reason why Claudio based his own theory on Plato and his practice on the music of the ‘divine Cipriano.’

8. ...but let them be assured that, with regard to the consonances and dissonances, there is still another way of considering them, different from the established way, ...

In the clarification of Claudio Monteverdi’s position concerning the treatment of consonances and dissonances, his brother sketches a black-and-white situation. By the established way he intends the rules as laid down by Zarlino in the third part of his treatise dealing with the perfection of the harmony, which are not paying attention to the text (*oratione*). He calls it a demonstration that harmony is the mistress and not the servant.<sup>26</sup>

9. ...which, with satisfaction to the reason and to the senses, defends the modern method of composing...

The satisfying reason apparently had to be through the justification of mathematics. But then Giulio Cesare states things his brother would have said but are not found in the *Lettera*: “and the way to apply them” (consonances and dissonances) and equally use them by command of the text, the principal master of the art, leading to the perfection of melody (*μελωδίᾳ*). As Plato confirms in the third book of the *Republic*.<sup>27</sup> In this way, the affects of the soul are moved and - as the *dichiaratione* continues by quoting the Latin translation of Marsilio Ficino - *sola enim melodia ab omnibus quotunque distrahunt animum retrahens contrahit in se ipsum*, (For melody alone draws the soul back from all that would draw it away, and draws it together into itself).

Giulio Cesare uses this passage to even include Zarlino in the Monteverdi-camp with a quote about the impossibility for harmony to produce any extrinsic effect just by itself.<sup>28</sup>

*“percioche se noi pigliaremo la semplice Harmonia, senza aggiungerle alcuna altra cosa, non hauerà possanza alcuna di fare alcuno effetto estrinseco delli sopranarrati; ancora che hauesse possanza ad vn certo modo, di dispor l'animo intrinsecamente, ad esprimere più facilmente alcune passioni, ouero effetti; si come ridere, o piangere.”*

(For if we pick the simple Harmonia, without adding anything else to it, it will have no power to produce any extrinsic effect of the above; although it may have the power in a certain

---

<sup>25</sup> Gioseffo Zarlino, *Sopplimenti musicali*, (Venice, Francesco dei Franceschi Senese, 1588) libro 1, chapter 1, p.9.

<sup>26</sup> Anonciade Russo in his *Monteverdi, Correspondances*, p.251, points at the injustice done to Zarlino, who in chapter 32 of the fourth part of the *Istitutioni harmoniche* says exactly the same thing as Monteverdi in his *Lettera*.

<sup>27</sup> *Republic*, book 3, page 398D. See also Palisca, *The Artusi-Monteverdi Controversy*, p.141 on the (extended) meaning of ‘melodia’ in this context.

<sup>28</sup> Zarlino, *Istitutioni*, II, chapter vii. p.71 line 12.



way to dispose the soul intrinsically to express more easily certain passions or effects, such as laughing or crying.)

10. ...I have wished to say this to you in order that the expression "Second Practice" may not be appropriated by anyone else, ...

Apparently, it was important to 'claim the brand' because Giulio Cesare underlines once more that Claudio was the first to use this term. According to this *Dichiaratione* of the defending letter, the term *seconda prattica* had barely left the mouth of Claudio, when the opponent would like - while they are still in the air<sup>29</sup> - to rip apart (litt. *lacerare* = *tear apart*) the writings as well as the music. This by naming the second practice the 'dregs' (*la feccia*) of the first practice.<sup>30</sup>

Giulio Cesare quotes in this passage most probably from the (lost) first pamphlet of Antonio Braccino da Todi, when he mentions the resentful remarks about Claudio's undue concern that his expression *seconda prattica* would be stolen by others. Artusi pulls the sarcastic register here by saying it was not a thing that one would even want to imitate.

Hereafter, to stress his status as an innovator, a bit of biography follows about Claudio Monteverdi importing the '*canto alla francese*' in Italy after returning from the baths of Spa in 1599.<sup>31</sup> Giulio Cesare points to the style of the *Scherzi musicali*, of which the *Dichiaratione* was a postface or an appendix.

And according to this paragraph, there were more things that could be said to the advantage of Claudio as an innovator, but his brother keeps silent about them because they did not fit in this context. The focus is on the *seconda prattica*, which he says could have been called 'prima' when considering its origin.

11. ...and further that the ingenious may reflect (or consider) meanwhile upon other secondary matters, concerning harmony...

By the ingenious are meant, according to Giulio Cesare, those who will not keep strongly believing in the unique legitimacy of the *prima prattica*, in which case harmony would always be the same optimised thing, no matter the text.

By the addition of the word secondary is meant that the *melodia* (music) is perfected according to the *seconda prattica*.

So, the criticised 'little details' contribute not only to the perfection of the cantilena but even more to the whole composition.<sup>32</sup> Here, the brother starts reasoning about the presumed confusion of Artusi about mixed modes. He even puts the words in his mouth 'as if one hears the reasoning of a madman' (*'il che è come sentire un pazzo ragionare'*) in relation of mixing

---

<sup>29</sup> Massimo Ossi, "Claudio Monteverdi's Ordine novo, bello et gustevole: The Canzonetta as Dramatic Module and Formal Archetype," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 45/2 (Summer, 1992) p.273. Ossi gives another reading of this passage in the *Dichiaratione* that is much more plausible than Oliver Strunk in his *Source Readings*.

<sup>30</sup> *Seconda Parte dell'Artusi* (1603) fol.33.

<sup>31</sup> In 1599, Claudio Monteverdi accompanied his patron, Vincenzo Gonzaga, on a journey to Spa, Brussels, and Antwerp. See Fabbri, *Monteverdi*, p.47.

<sup>32</sup> I accept Coluzzi's opinion that there is a misreading by Strunk, 'frutto' should be 'tutto' which means 'the whole.' (= the entire madrigal) Seth Coluzzi, "'Se Vedesti Qui Dentro': Monteverdi's 'O Mirtillo, Mirtillo Anima Mia' and Artusi's Offence", *Music & Letters*, 94/1, (February 2013), p.3, n. 6.

modes.<sup>33</sup> But using as a defence that one could say the same of the mass *Fait tan Regrez* (sic) (*'Faisant regretz'*) by Josquin des Prez, he goes wrong himself. Claude Palisca suggested that Giulio Cesare lacked the courage to proclaim the end of "the tyranny of the modes." Whereas Palisca sees Galilei purposefully going towards a system of tonality in the way of the ancient Greeks, he concludes that Monteverdi was heading intuitively and pragmatically in the same direction just by putting it into practice.<sup>34</sup>

12. ...and believe that the modern composer builds upon the fundamentals of truth. Live happily.

Giulio Cesare concludes by explaining that in the modern way of composing, it is impossible to obey the rules of the *prima prattica* (which is already embraced by the world as the usual way) just because the text commands otherwise. But even if his reasoning would not be convincing to underpin the truth of such a practice, his brother says it is the world that is deluded and, for sure, his opponent.

---

<sup>33</sup> *L'Artusi*, fol. 48v, see Palisca, *The Artusi-Monteverdi Controversy*, p.144.

<sup>34</sup> *Idem*, p.146, "Claudio could not yet foresee the theoretical implications of his creative impulses."